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Theism and the modern mood

THEISM
AND THE MODERN MOOD

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THEISM AND THE MODERN MOOD

By
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OBERLIN COLLEGE

With an Introduction by
WILLIAM ADAMS BROWN
UNION THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

1930

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THEISM
AND THE
MODERN
MOOD

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TO
EUGENE W. LYMAN
TEACHER
AND
FRIEND

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Introduction

THERE are two reasons why I appreciate the privilege of commending Professor Horton's fresh and stimulating discussion of faith in God to the large numbers of thoughtful men and women who are seeking for some organizing principle in their own religious thinking. In the first place, because in this book Professor Horton says in clear and simple language some things which it seems to me important to have said. But in the second place, and even more, because of the manner in which he has said them.

There was a time, not so long ago, when it was assumed that those who differed in religious belief could hold no fellowship with

one another. An important function of ecclesiastical councils was to pronounce anathemas upon those who were heretical in their faith. Two years ago, at Lausanne, representatives of a large number of Christian communions took part in a conference which was inspired by a different philosophy, a philosophy which recognized the possibility of unity in spite of difference. Those who met at Lausanne represented bodies holding widely different beliefs in matters of faith and order, yet were conscious of a common religious life which they desired to share. Their experience at Lausanne confirmed the conviction with which they started, that in order to have fellowship with those who differ from us, even in points we deem important, it is not necessary for us to surrender our own convictions.

Those who took part in the discussions at Lausanne were all of them theists who found their bond of union in a common acceptance

of the Christian faith. It is worth raising the question, however, whether the method followed at Lausanne may not be fruitfully applied to those who differ still more widely, as widely, for example, as theists and humanists differ.

To those who would like an answer to this question Professor Horton's book may be confidently recommended as an example of a faith that can sympathize even where it differs. He is a theist who believes that in their major point of contention humanists are wrong. But he finds it possible to say so in words which express his deep sympathy with them in many of the things they affirm.

This is not an easy thing to do. Few subjects touch more fundamental interests or appeal to deeper emotions than those which are at issue between those who believe in a personal God and those who do not. It is only natural, therefore, that writers on either

side should be tempted to emphasize the points of difference to such a degree as to do scant justice to the underlying agreements. Professor Horton resists this temptation. He does not minimize the real issues which are at stake in the current debate between humanists and theists. On the contrary, he states them with commendable clarity and leaves no doubt on which side his own conviction lies. But he sees also the truth for which humanists contend and is eager that theists should be generous in their recognition of it. Just because he believes in a God who is really cosmic he desires to find a point of contact between that God and all his human children; and he sees in contemporary humanism more than one indication that the God in whom he believes is in fact at work among those who find the conventional ways of describing him difficult, as well as among those

who feel themselves at home in the older ways of thinking.

I am at a loss to know to whom the book should be more heartily commended, to theists who want to know what can be said for humanism or to humanists who are open-minded enough really to wish to understand what an intelligent theist believes.

WILLIAM ADAMS BROWN

THEISM
AND THE MODERN MOOD

CHAPTER I

The Modern Mood

I

WHEN we look back over the decade that has elapsed since the signing of the Treaty of Versailles, and contrast it with the previous decade, we are at once conscious of a vast alteration in the whole climate of opinion. In a sense, it was not the war itself which did most to shake the foundations of our ways of thinking; it was its aftermath of disillusionment.

The decade which led up to and included the war was a period of intense social idealism and social optimism. In public life, it was the period of the rapid rise of Progres-

sivism in both of the major political parties; when Theodore Roosevelt took his stand at Armageddon to do battle for the Lord, and Woodrow Wilson stirred the blood of youth with his attacks upon "dollar diplomacy" and his enlightened plea for "the new freedom." In religious circles, it was the period of the immense popularity of the Social Gospel; when "service" and "self-sacrifice" were the watchwords of the day, and the literal coming of the Kingdom of God on Earth seemed only a matter of a perfectly measurable and practicable amount of time and cooperative effort. God himself, in the popular preaching of those piping times before the war, was an eminently cheerful object for contemplation. Shorn of the last vestiges of his former Calvinistic severity and endowed in exchange with the attributes of an American parent, too fond of his children to refuse them anything, and always sure to pick them

up and dust them off when they got into trouble—truly the God of Christian faith was a very comforting and comfortable God! I do not wish to be unduly satirical at the expense of this pre-war deity—*de mortuis nil nisi bonum*—but I remember distinctly how a friend said to me in the year 1914, "Do you know, I think God must be a very easy-going sort of chap"; and I recollect that people used to sing with a good deal of gusto that drinking-song of Bullard's in which it is claimed that "Our God is not censorious if his children have their fling." So it seemed—before the war.

Now the amazing thing is, not that some people lost their optimism when the war began, but that the great mass of people held on to it tenaciously, with certain inevitable modifications, to the very end of the war—only to abandon it in disgust not long after the Armistice. The tide of social idealism and social

millennialism did not abate during the war; it rose to heroic and almost incredible heights. The war was to "make the world safe for democracy"; it was to "end war" forever; in the "new age" after the war, all human institutions were to be reconstructed on a basis of ideal justice; through the awful travail and sacrifice of the great conflict, the coming of the Kingdom of God was to be hastened, even as by the sacrifice of the Son of Man on Calvary. Faith in God, too, survived amazingly in those troublous times. So long as one could continue to believe that the accomplishments of the war were likely to be commensurate with its appalling sacrifices, one could continue to see in it all the hand of an over-ruling Providence. True, it was necessary to exonerate God from any complicity in the atrocities committed by our enemies. In the endeavor to clear him of all possible guilt, many of our bolder thinkers

adopted the radical expedient of making him finite: a Captain and Comrade, only slightly superhuman in stature, leading the embattled hosts of righteousness in an uncertain but heroically determined onslaught upon the cosmic Principle of Evil, which, with our aid, he proposed to conquer, bind in chains, and hurl clean out of the universe into ultimate annihilation—just as we should like to do with our enemies if we could catch them. Yet the hypothesis of a finite God turned out to be only a temporary intellectual expedient, in which the mind could not rest for long. Mr. H. G. Wells himself, in his more recent novels, seems to have abandoned it for a sort of agnostic Stoicism; while more definitely Christian thinkers repented of their extremer utterances[1] as soon as the war was over, and went back to a Christian theism

[1] Some of these utterances are quoted in Professor Max Otto's *Things and Ideals*, in the remarkable chapter on "The War and the God-Makers."

more solidly grounded than the shallow optimism of pre-war days. As the insane passions and delusions of the conflict died away, it became evident that a truly Christian attitude toward the enemy or the evildoer implied a desire to improve his condition, rather than a desire to see him annihilated, and that this in turn implied the belief that evil in general is something transmutable and convertible, containing a soul of good, hence constituting no final and absolute obstacle to the power of God.

It must be confessed, however, that the subsidence of the war spirit did not lead many people back to Christian theism. It led, on the contrary, to a wave of spiritual depression and religious skepticism, widespread and devastating. Superficially, ours is a light-hearted age, which has tossed the grave responsibilities of the previous decade gaily off its shoulders, and gone in for the pursuit of

pleasure and material comforts, without a single *arrière-pensée.* Actually, there is little mirth in our gaiety; it is all flavored with the gall of bitterness. Jazz is the perfect symbol of our mood: raucous ribaldry on the surface, with a deep undercurrent of the blues, syncopated to conceal the heartbreak, blaring loud dissonant defiance at all who would presume to question the genuineness of its hilarity. Our merriment is like that of one who has trusted and been betrayed, one who plunges into revelry in the endeavor to forget his mental misery. We trusted our political leaders, when they told us of the villainy of our enemies, and the unimpeachable purity of the aims by which we and our allies were inspired; and, rightly or not, the impression is now abroad that they betrayed us. We trusted our religious leaders, when they proclaimed their apocalyptic visions of a new heaven and a new earth, whose coming was contingent

upon the military victory of the Allied Powers; and, at any rate since the collapse of the Interchurch World Movement, we are pretty well convinced that *they* betrayed us. We trusted that God would, somehow, balance the stupendous evils of the war by an equal weight of good, that would immediately accrue to us in the post-war period; and if faith in God is declining today, it is because many feel that *that* faith, too, has betrayed them.

Whatever may be the cause of it, the fact of a decline of faith in God seems undeniable. The Unitarian Church serves as a pretty good barometer for the detection of approaching theological storms; and there is good historical precedent for predicting that when not merely a few eccentric individuals but a large, self-conscious group in that denomination boldly adopts the humanist label, and frankly rejects the belief in God and im-

mortality, the humanist hurricane is going to strike all Christendom before long. Whether we should fly before that gale, or seek to ride it out, is the most pressing problem with which Christian thought is confronted today. Yet it is to be hoped that the approaching controversy in the churches will not so center our attention upon the humanists that we shall take them as representatives of the utmost depths to which contemporary skepticism can descend; for there exists a group of people whose deep disillusionment is not content to stop with the denial of God and immortality, but goes on to assert the illusoriness of all human values, and the general futility of human existence. To this group, of which Mr. Joseph Wood Krutch is the spokesman, the humanistic exaltation of human ideals and values looks as fondly credulous as the theistic attitude of dependence on God looks to the humanist. "Futili-

tarianism" as well as humanism must be taken into account, if we are rightly to appraise the post-war mood, and measure the full extent of the change in intellectual climate which has taken place.

II

The foregoing description of the temper of our age might justly be accused of one-sidedness. This *is* an age of skepticism, cynicism and disillusionment; but it is also, and simultaneously, an age that is wistfully in quest of religious sustenance and religious certitude, and almost pathetically credulous when given half a chance. Skeptical and disillusioned; wistful and credulous—is that not an impossible combination? Possible or impossible, that is the actual paradox of the contemporary mood; and to balance our description we must now turn to the second half of that paradox.

The special form which the religious quest assumes in our generation is negatively conditioned by the collapse of social idealism, which tends to turn religious aspiration into individualistic channels. "Service," "Loyalty," "Sacrifice in devotion to the cause of the Kingdom," all the old slogans which were used as the basis of a religious appeal to college students in my day, are definitely *out.* A speaker who attempted to give a "clarion call to service" in college today would be met with an attitude of pained incredulity, if not with snorts of derision. "No more of that for us!" say the students. "Our elder brothers were taken in by that sort of thing, and look what came of it!" [2] Today there is just one

[2] Cf. the following passage in a recent Harvard Class Day oration: "The preceding generations were outstandingly worshipers of faith. . . . Their faith did not fail them till much of the established order failed from incompetency. We do not propose to wait thus long. . . . We are charged with lack of reverence; but what shall we reverence?"

text that really "goes" in college chapel—it is being used so much that it is already becoming hackneyed—"I am come that they might have life, and might have it more abundantly." In other words, personal self-realization has become the central concern.[8]

With this concern about self-realization there often goes a very real uneasiness about the whole problem of the meaning of life; and for many students, the attempt to live without standards of conduct or religious beliefs involves a mental strain so unbearable that they are ready to believe and follow any religious guide who assumes an air of certi-

[8] In college courses on religious problems, I have noted a considerable shifting of the focus of interest. In my own college days, and in fact for some time after the Armistice, the burning issues were all matters of social ethics: Socialism *vs.* Capitalism, Pacifism *vs.* Militarism, etc. Today, the only question of social ethics which students seriously care to discuss is the question of Sex and the Family; and they are beginning to evince a marked interest in problems of theological belief and personal religion.

tude. It is precisely the most skeptical students who are the most apt to yield to a sudden attack of credulity, for the simple reason that it is they who feel the lack of religious certitude most painfully.[4] The attitude of complete incredulity is in fact inconsistent with the quest of self-realization. To demand everything of life without trusting life, to seek a full, rich, colorful existence without yielding to any enthusiasm, is a psychological impossibility. Eventually the youth must and will believe in something. I hasten to add that the object of his faith is likely to be something quite new and strange, as different as possible from the childhood religion which he has learned to mistrust. An Evangelical Protestant in quest of personal self-realization is much more likely to go to a

[4] More than once I have been surprised, at the end of a conversation with a radically skeptical student, to have him ask me an obviously wistful question about the claims of the Roman Catholic Church.

psychoanalyst, an astrologer, or a Christian Science practitioner than he is to attend a revival or a prayer meeting. He is not likely to recognize that the quest of self-realization is simply a modern equivalent for the Evangelical quest of personal salvation.

The situation in our churches is in many respects parallel to the situation in the colleges. Here, again, one notes the decline of social religion, the revival of personal religion, and the quest of theological certitude. The most outstanding phenomenon in contemporary church life is the replacement of the practical ethical emphasis of pre-war days by a strongly *mystical* emphasis. Books on the "social gospel" have been largely set aside in favor of manuals of devotion, studies of the mystics, and books on applied psychology and mental hygiene. The effort which formerly went into social service now goes into personal counseling or into the æsthetic en-

richment of the public service of worship. Immense sums of money are being spent in the building of vast Gothic edifices, where begowned and besurpliced ministers and choirs, a little self-conscious in their unaccustomed toggery, essay imitations of Catholic ritual and intone plain-songs in quasi-medieval style.

It is easy to poke fun at a certain conscious antiquarianism and artificiality in all this; we seem to be cultivating devotional exercises and forms of music and architecture which sprang from a religious spirit quite alien to our own. And yet it may be that the only way we can prepare our fatigued and neurotic spirits for a renewal of social action —which *must* come eventually, if the church is to save her own soul—is by a temporary retreat into the past, where, quietly contemplating the beauty of form and ritual in which faith once clothed itself, we may find

faith rekindled in us by a process of contagion. Unless this occurs, unless the revival of worship finds its completion in a revival of religious conviction and religious certitude, the whole enterprise will come to naught; for the strengthening and healing power of worship depends upon the conviction that in the act of worship we are not merely playing clever psychological tricks upon ourselves, but are in some sense coming face to face with reality. Reality in worship, not technical skill in worship, is primary. There is a certain æsthetic satisfaction in merely going through the stately motions in which the heartfelt piety of our ancestors expressed itself. Almost we are persuaded that we are more than actors in a religious pageant —almost! Yet the difference between reality and make-believe is in the long run fundamental; and unless the revival of worship can go hand in hand with a revival of belief in

God, we shall presently toss aside our manuals of devotion and our expensive æsthetic paraphernalia as a child discards a broken toy.

This is the reason, I believe, for the new eagerness and urgency with which men are seeking theological certitude today: not only clergymen, but laymen. I know no way of explaining to myself the tremendous vogue of the writings of Will Durant and Walter Lippmann, or the amazing volume of the flood of popular religious literature which is pouring from our printing presses, except upon the assumption that the great masses of the people, both in our churches and outside them, are becoming genuinely disturbed about the meaning of life, and genuinely concerned to discover some object of religious trust around which their lives may revolve like planets around a sun. That means that the amiable vagueness and the air of uncertainty which have characterized so much of

our liberal preaching in the past generation are no longer going to be tolerated. The day is past when a minister could get along without a theology, by the aid of a homiletical knack and a friendly disposition. Today the man who is not equipped with a well-reasoned theology—not a tight dogmatic system, of course, but a good working tool-kit of rational convictions—that man is helpless to meet the deepest needs of his parish. And yet to achieve such a theology today is supremely difficult. No creed that is learned by rote will suffice; one's convictions must be forged in the heat of current ethical, scientific and philosophical discussion, and tempered with as profound a knowledge of the whole history of thought and culture as one can possibly acquire. Truly, in this day when men are crying out with the pain of religious uncertainty, and inquiring wistfully for the way that leads to the knowledge of God and

of the good life, the minister who has neglected his theology may find himself in a most embarrassing position. While the theologian —I speak with feeling—may well quake with dismay as he finds the eyes of millions thus suddenly and unexpectedly fixed upon him, with a look of expectancy that will brook no denial.

III

We have attempted to describe the paradoxical temper of our age—its pessimism and its mysticism, its cynical incredulity and its wistful yearning for religious certitude—with a view to furnishing a background for our discussion, in the next chapter, of the chief theological issue with which we are confronted: the humanistic denial of the reality of God. But it would be a mistake to suppose that we could adequately understand the meaning of humanism, or any other present-

day issue, simply in terms of the peculiar tendencies which have characterized this post-war decade. As a matter of fact, the leading issues of our day are all inherited from the period before the war, and spring from long-standing issues which Christian theism has already encountered time and time again; and these long-standing issues have simply taken on a peculiar poignancy in the light of recent tragic events. The post-war mood, in short, is only a special form of the modern mood; and the inconsistencies of post-war thinking have their roots in a fundamental self-contradiction which runs through the whole development of what we call the modern mind. The post-war disillusionment we have been describing is probably a passing episode—already, it would seem, the atmosphere of depression is beginning to lift a bit [5]

[5] The revival of interest in the war itself, expressed in war plays, war novels, war stories, etc., is doing much, I believe, to restore us to sanity.

—and we must therefore expand our horizon to take in the whole period since the Renaissance, if we are to see the problems of the day in proper perspective.

For our purposes we may conveniently summarize the whole dramatic story of what Dr. Randall has called the *Making of the Modern Mind* in the history of the word "humanism." Renaissance humanism, eighteenth-century humanitarianism, nineteenth-century positivism, expressing itself in the "religion of humanity"—there in a nutshell you have the historical antecedents of the present humanist movement; and there in a nutshell you have the whole pilgrimage of the modern spirit. To note the process of action and reaction which has continually been going on between this humanistic tradition and two other traditions—Christian theism on the one hand and scientific naturalism on the other—is to get the best possible back-

ground against which to view the issues with which we are faced at present.

It was in the sixteenth century that Christian theism first encountered the modern mood; and, then as now, the main body of the invading host fought under a banner on which was inscribed the word "humanism." [6] But humanism in the days of the Renaissance and the Reformation was something very different from the humanism with which we are faced today. Then, humanism was looking backward to classical antiquity for light and guidance; now, humanism is looking forward for light and guidance, to the future develop-

[6] There is a sense, of course, in which it may be claimed that humanism (*i.e.*, the spirit of Greece and Rome) has always been affecting Christian thought, ever since Christianity moved out of its Jewish environment into the Græco-Roman world. Cf. Richards, *Christian Ways of Salvation,* Chapter X, "The Way of the Humanists," where Pelagius is treated as a humanist, and Hough, *Evangelical Humanism,* where the term is pretty consistently used in this very broad sense. Cf. also L. J. A. Mercier, *Le mouvement humaniste aux Etats-Unis,* which treats of men like Irving Babbitt and Paul Elmer More —humanists in the classical or Renaissance sense of the word.

ment of psychology and the social sciences. Then, humanism was indifferent or frankly hostile in its attitude toward the natural sciences,[7] which were making their first momentous advances under the leadership of Copernicus and Galileo; now, humanism has adopted scientific naturalism as part of its creed, and given over to it the whole vast cosmos—exempting from its dominion only the shadowy realm of human values and ideals, which cast a transitory and perhaps fictitious glamour over the life of our little planet. In spite of all these differences, there are two vital points of contact between Renaissance humanism and modern humanism: an interest in making human life happier not in the world to come but here on earth, and an abiding faith in the dignity of man, the goodness of human nature, the trustworthiness of hu-

[7] Cf. Randall, *The Making of the Modern Mind*, p. 213: "Despite popular legend to the contrary, for natural science humanism was and has remained (?) an unmitigated curse."

man reason and conscience. Much as the Renaissance humanists differed amongst themselves in their literary and ethical theories, they tended to agree in rejecting the medieval view that man is a "worm of the dust," and this world a "vale of tears." [8] Here is the hidden bond which links the Christian humanism of Erasmus with the frankly pagan humanism of Rabelais. Both protested—one in the name of New Testament Christianity, the other without asking leave or warrant—against all ascetic mortifications of the flesh and crucifixion of the intellect, on the ground that man is inherently a good and noble creature, who needs only liberty and enlightenment in order to attain true blessedness.

[8] The Christian humanism of men like Melanchthon, Zwingli, and Calvin must be excluded from this generalization. They advocated introducing classical studies and "humane letters" into the school curriculum, but had no deep sympathy with classical culture. Indeed, they outdid medieval theology in their exaggerated emphasis upon the total depravity of man, and the worthlessness of this present life.

The effect of Renaissance humanism upon Christian theism is best seen in the Socinian movement, from which modern Unitarianism more or less directly traces its descent. As "the earliest organized expression of the humanistic spirit in religion," [9] Socinianism naturally failed to apply its own principles with complete consistency; and yet its earnest insistence upon the moral ability of man, and the necessity of interpreting the revealed will of God in accordance with the dictates of sound reason, resulted in a radical reconstruction of traditional theology. Everything implying that a man needed divine aid to help him do his duty was strictly eliminated; which meant that there was no need of any "means of grace," any atoning sacrifice, or any divine Saviour. Divine *light* to show man the way in which he should go—yes, that was necessary; yet nothing revealed in the Scrip-

[9] McGiffert, *Protestant Thought Before Kant*, p. 107.

tures could be irrational or immoral. The great gulf which medieval thought had set between man, the helpless creature, and God, the omnipotent Creator, tended thus to be diminished. Man rose from his knees and stood looking up into heaven with an air of calm self-sufficiency, unconscious of any guilt or weakness and asking only for guidance—always reserving the right to reject any alleged divine revelation which failed to square with his own reason and conscience.

The deity, in this new system of things, was in a most delicate situation. If divine revelation affronted human ideals of goodness and rationality, its authority would be disputed; if, on the other hand, it failed to go beyond what man's own reason and conscience could reveal, the sole remaining function of deity would then disappear, and the very idea of God might be dismissed, as involving a needless hypothesis. This logic was,

of course, not perceived by the Socinians, who regarded themselves as simple Bible Christians; but in the subsequent history of the Unitarian movement it has worked out along both lines. On the one hand, we find the demand for a humane and reasonable deity, issuing in a conception of God too flawlessly rational, too impeccably good to be true; on the other hand, we find the gradual abandonment of the belief in a special divine revelation, issuing in the contemporary humanistic confidence in man's ability to get along without God altogether.

If the sixteenth century was predominantly humanistic, the seventeenth was predominantly naturalistic in its outlook. The humanists had combined with the Catholics and the Protestants, to discourage and discredit the whole scientific enterprise; for it seemed almost wicked to spend one's life in idle prying into the processes of nature, when one

might spend it in the promotion of human happiness. But now we begin to meet with a succession of great names, corresponding to a succession of great scientific triumphs—Kepler, Galileo, Descartes, Pascal, Huyghens, Boyle, Newton—and the majesty of the natural order begins to enthrall men's imaginations. It was not commonly perceived that the new knowledge of nature was, as Francis Bacon had predicted, destined to put new powers into human hands; men were simply overwhelmed at first with the vastness, the orderliness, the mechanical inexorability of the new universe. It should be carefully noted that the mood induced by the new naturalism was exactly the reverse of the humanistic mood of pride and self-sufficiency: a mood of profound humility and self-abasement. "The silence of these infinite spaces frightens me!" cried Pascal; and in his famous fragment on the "two infinites" (the one revealed

by the telescope and the other by the microscope) he conveys to us, undiminished by the passage of the years, the sense of vertigo which swept over his generation at the thought of man's precarious and inconsequential position, lost between the infinitely great and the infinitely small.

Few indeed were the minds capable of making a thoroughgoing theological readjustment in the seventeenth century. Orthodox theologians troubled their heads little about physical science; and yet its implications, for those who took it seriously, were devastating in the extreme. How to find God in the new universe was a knotty problem. Giordano Bruno, in the previous century, had managed it by thinking of the universe as alive, and making God its animating spirit; but the mathematical and mechanical system of Descartes left no room for that now. Spinoza found religious satisfaction in deify-

ing the mechanical structure of things, and bowing before the rigid impersonal necessity which he saw manifested in the mind of man as well as in the motions of the stars; but there were few who understood and none who followed him. It was not until the eighteenth century, when naturalism and humanism were united in the humanitarian movement, that the theological implications of the new knowledge began to be generally felt.

How naturalism and humanism ever *could* unite is a matter that demands some explanation. Naturalism humbles man; humanism exalts him. Yet, in a sense, the development of natural science chimed in with the humanistic mood: it gave man a sense of power over his physical environment. Merely to know, ministers to a sense of human dignity. Thus Pascal could say that man is greater than the universe which crushes him, since he

knows that he is being crushed. But when to the knowledge of nature there was added the growing measure of practical *control* over nature, which began in the eighteenth century to spring from this knowledge, man's place in the universe seemed more assured. Thus throughout the eighteenth century naturalism played directly into the hands of humanism; and the prospect of scientific control over the physical environment, wedded to the belief in human perfectibility, gave birth to the central idea around which the whole humanitarian creed revolves: the idea of progress.[10]

The sublime self-confidence of the eighteenth-century humanitarians has never been equaled since, and probably never will be. One might suppose that it would logically

[10] The heritage of Unitarianism from the eighteenth century humanitarianism is embodied in the culminating clause of a popular Unitarian creed: "the progress of mankind onward and upward forever."

lead to a complete atheism; and such was the consequence, in the case of a few logical Frenchmen. Most people, however, felt that a God was still indispensable for certain purposes: to construct the great world-machine in the first place, to keep it in good running order (some said this ought not to be necessary), and finally to furnish incentives to morality in the shape of rewards and punishments in a future life. This conception of God (commonly known as the deistic conception) made him immensely remote from humanity in time and space; and the fact that the "Age of Reason" could be content with such a deity shows that human self-sufficiency had mounted to a giddy height.

The descent was swift and shattering. Never, except perhaps during the period since 1914, has man's opinion of his own abilities been so rapidly deflated as it was toward the end of the eighteenth century. Two causes of

about equal magnitude contributed to that deflation: the French Revolution and the philosophy of Immanuel Kant.

Rightly or wrongly, the disorders and excesses which accompanied and followed the French Revolution were regarded as a practical demonstration of the impotence of human reason, and the depravity of human nature. Voltaire, Diderot, and Rousseau had attempted, it was said, to manufacture a new social order and a new religion without consulting historical precedent, trusting implicitly in their own "clear and distinct ideas." All such rationalistic dreams lead to disaster, for they tend to ignore essential facts of nature and human nature. As between abstract reason, on the one hand, and tradition, custom, natural instinct, poetic intuition, and religious faith, on the other, the generation that survived the Napoleonic wars unhesitatingly cast its vote for the latter. Anything

was better than reason as a guide to life! The fathers of the French Revolution were viewed with a scorn only to be compared with the scorn now being heaped upon the worthies of the mid-Victorian Era; and if Rousseau and Kant escaped to some extent the opprobrium heaped upon other eighteenth-century philosophers, it was precisely because they had tended, more than their contemporaries, to disparage the powers of the human reason.

While the philosophy of Kant owed something of its vogue to the peculiar revulsion of feeling caused by the French Revolution, it deserves a place by itself as a major factor in the making of the modern mind; for it has proved its ability to dominate philosophic and religious thought from that day to this. It represents an original and subtle but somewhat unstable combination of the humanistic and naturalistic tendencies. On its humanistic side, it gave birth to Romantic Idealism; on

its naturalistic side, to Positivism and Agnosticism.

By insisting that the human mind is active and not passive in the act of cognition, Kant restored man to a place of central importance in the cosmos, and apparently annulled the results of the Copernican revolution, for he seemed to show that this whole vast sidereal universe, in which man appears to be a meaningless mote, was after all but a creation of the human understanding, and time and space themselves were products of our human ways of perceiving. The world of natural science was only a shadow-world, a world of appearance—such seemed to be the upshot of the *Critique of Pure Reason*; while the *Critique of Practical Reason* and the *Critique of Judgment* seemed to hint that in moral conscience and æsthetic intuition man had faculties which pierced deeper into the ultimate nature

of things than scientific analysis could ever penetrate.

It was this side of the philosophy of Kant which paved the way for the riotous and irresponsible speculations of the period of romantic idealism—satirized by George Santayana as the period of "Absolute Egotism in German Philosophy"—when universes were made and shattered overnight as if man were the Divine Potter and the cosmos were mere plastic clay in his hands. It would not be fair to say that the position of man in the romantic universe was always an arrogant one: if for Fichte the Self was absolutely dominant over the world of Nature, for Schelling and Schleiermacher its position was one of absolute dependence; yet in the sense that man was taken as the best gateway to the understanding of the universe, it might be said that the world of idealistic philosophy was always a thoroughly humanistic world.

Toward the middle of the nineteenth century, the epoch of romanticism in philosophy came abruptly to an end, and gave way to an epoch of positivism and agnosticism, which lasted well on into the present century, and cannot be said to have come, even yet, to any definitive close. Characteristic of this period has been the tendency to deny the possibility of knowing the ultimate nature of the world, the tendency to accept a natural-science view of the cosmos, and the tendency to regard human values as purely subjective phenomena, relative to human desires, and having no cosmic or objective significance whatsoever. This tendency to make a sharp cleavage between a world of grim reality, on the one side, and a world of enchanting ideality, on the other, is obviously the reverse of the romantic tendency to identify the world of fact with the world of fancy; yet the positivists

can find good authority for their position in the philosophy of Kant.

It was in fact only one side of the philosophy of Kant that the romanticists exploited; there was another aspect to his thought which, when its logic was pressed by the positivists, led in exactly the opposite direction. Much as Kant emphasized the spontaneity of the human mind, he never supposed it to be capable of constructing the real world of "things in themselves"; and the very unavoidability of our habit of viewing the world through the peculiar blue spectacles, with which our human organism happens to be fitted, made him profoundly skeptical of the possibility of knowing the ultimate truth about it. Whatever the world may be, a good Kantian might say, it is certainly not what it appears to us to be; and he might well conclude, with the positivists and agnostics, that we come closest to the truth when we elimi-

nate the personal equation most completely, through the use of the objective methods of natural science. Complete naturalism and complete humanism can both be deduced from the philosophy of Kant; and both deductions have been made.

What is called humanism today is a curiously involved mixture of the two logics, naturalistic in its view of the physical universe, humanistic in its exaltation of human values, hesitating between a proud self-sufficiency reminiscent of the eighteenth century and a cosmic nostalgia reminiscent of the seventeenth. If Renaissance humanism was opposed to naturalism, if eighteenth-century humanitarianism represented an optimistic harmony of naturalism and humanism, modern humanism (typified in Comte's Religion of Humanity) represents an attempt to combine the two in a way that results in perpetual inner discord, and perpetual fluctuation of

mood from the heights of self-confidence to the depths of despair.

It will be the task of the next chapter to examine the paradox involved in contemporary humanism; for the present, we are concerned only to note the general fact that the modern mood has never yet succeeded in extricating itself from inner contradictions, so as to achieve a really stable equilibrium in its outlook upon life. Optimism and pessimism, skepticism and credulity, childish self-confidence and abject helplessness, jostle each other incessantly in the modern mind; and a theology which desires above all things to be modern and up-to-the-minute is bound to partake of the same instability. This is evident when we cast a glance over the development of liberal theology in the last century.

Whereas in the eighteenth century the prevailing "liberal" conception of God was that of a completely transcendent being, external

to the universe he had created, the early nineteenth century saw a sudden swing of the pendulum toward the opposite extreme of complete immanence. And in much nineteenth-century liberalism God becomes simply the living, growing, organic Whole of things—a pantheistic idea taken over bodily from the poets and philosophers, without much critical analysis, because it seemed so obvious at the time that it was more religious to view the world as an organism than to view it as a mechanism. Yet at the middle of the century, liberal theology found itself once more out of touch with the temper of the period, and was forced to execute another abrupt *volte-face*. As the theology of Schleiermacher is a typical expression of the spirit of romanticism, so the theology of Ritschl, with its metaphysical agnosticism and its exaltation of human values, is a typical, though not extreme expression of the spirit

of positivism. It was the strength and the weakness of both of these theologies that they were thoroughly in harmony with the temper of their times.

The modern mood is a fickle and unstable mood [11]—that is the primary impression which emerges both from our study of this post-war period and from our review of the intellectual history of the last four hundred years. What are we to conclude, then? Are we to say, with Karl Barth and his reactionary school, that there is nothing in the modern mind worth assimilating, and that the whole attempt of liberal theology to come to some understanding with modern ideas was a fatal blunder? No, we cannot say that; there is too much of proven worth in modern science and

[11] Cf. Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World,* Chapter V, opening paragraphs, where this instability is traced to the radical inconsistency between science conceived as the tool of energetic human purpose and science conceived as a scheme of cosmology which denied the very existence of everything purposive!

modern humanitarianism. Indeed, we may go so far as to say that no form of Christianity which fails to assimilate the contributions of the modern mind can possibly inherit the future. Yet it must be equally evident that any form of Christianity which undiscriminatingly attempts to assimilate the entire contents of the modern mind will find itself being pulled North and South at one and the same time, and pitched about constantly from one extreme to another. What is badly needed, it would seem, is a theology which can sympathize with the spirit of the age without being blinded by it; which can bring to the issues of the moment a power of discrimination and a power of resistance born of historical perspective. Such a theology might be able to solve successfully the difficult problem we are next to face: that of separating the valid from the fallacious elements in contemporary humanism.

CHAPTER II

Whither Humanism?

SEVERAL years ago, there appeared in the *Atlantic Monthly*[1] a thought-provoking article by Justin Wroe Nixon, entitled "The Evangelicals' Dilemma." The author described most discerningly—prophetically, in fact—the embarrassing position into which the Liberal, or "Modernist," party in the Evangelical churches was drifting. Occupied with the task of defending the scientific point of view against the attacks of fundamentalism, the liberals commonly failed to observe the fact that in backing away from the fundamentalists they were moving directly toward the camp of the humanists—an

[1] September, 1925, pp. 368-374.

enemy of whose very existence they were still unconscious. If, then, argues Mr. Nixon, there is really any tenable middle ground between fundamentalism and humanism—and he is inclined to think that Western civilization will split in two unless such a middle ground can be found—then it is necessary for liberal Christianity to become just as critical of contemporary science and philosophy as it has been of theological orthodoxy. "Where Liberalism is patchy and opportunistic," he says, "it must develop intellectual consistency and courage. It must cease to drift."

The present discussion attempts to show that the humanists are now caught in the same dilemma in which the modernists found themselves when Mr. Nixon wrote his article. The modernists are ceasing to drift. Alarmed at last by the destructive conclusions which

are being drawn from premises which they have long taken for granted, the modernists are beginning to consolidate their straggling forces, and to examine the state of their defenses on that side of their position which faces toward the humanistic camp. Vagueness is giving way to something very like clarity, and theological indifferentism to theological alertness. But in the camp of the humanists confusion still reigns. Straggling bands of rebels and free-lances of every shade of dissent are crowding the ranks of the new religious movement, and raising discordant war-cries, among which the only universally popular one would seem to be "Down With Supernaturalism!" And meanwhile, just over the next hill beyond the humanists, a thin column of smoke advertises the existence of another militant group—a sad but courageous group, with no hope in their hearts to cloud the clarity of their vision—who claim that it

is they, and not the humanists, who really represent the modern mood.

Whither humanism?—that is a question that may well be put to the leaders of the new movement at just this juncture; for it is capable of leading in diametrically opposite directions. If it follows the logic of scientific naturalism, which it is using as a weapon of attack against conservative religion, it may find human values dissolving at its touch, and land finally in the complete disillusionment of Mr. Joseph Wood Krutch. On the other hand, if it reckons seriously with the peril from that quarter, and succeeds in working out a humanistic logic which guarantees human values against the corroding acids of naturalism, may it not be led by that humanistic logic much closer to theism than it now cares to stand?

I do not mean to imply by these military metaphors that our attitude toward the hu-

manists should be one of hostility. It would ill become liberal theists to exclude the humanists from Christian fellowship, while continuing to inveigh against the exclusiveness of the fundamentalists. Where is the standard of orthodoxy to which we can appeal? There has never been such a thing as a non-theistic Christianity; true, but there has never been such a thing as a scientific Christianity, either, and we are trying to create it against the protests of many conservatives. When the fundamentalist controversy broke out, we claimed that the Christian spirit was something that went deeper than mere matters of theological opinion; and many of us have since proved the possibility of communing—greatly to the enrichment of our insight—with our fellow Christians on the other side of that great intellectual gulf. There is no reason why we should not enjoy the same fellowship with our humanist friends.

But, one might say, the humanist position logically undermines the very central things in the Christian Gospel! Well, for that matter, there have been other theologies which have been just as destructive of Christian values, and some of them have been considered orthodox! Pantheism is just as remote from Christian theism in one direction as humanism is in the other, and its logical result is to cut the nerve of ethical endeavor; yet many of our greatest Christian thinkers have leaned toward pantheism. Much as I admire the theology of Schleiermacher, much as I am impressed with the absolute idealism of my revered teacher, Josiah Royce, I cannot avoid the conviction that these theories invite a dangerous ethical lassitude by suggesting that the victory over evil is somehow already won in eternity.

Even more perilous to Christian values are all abstract theories of divine omnipotence

which reduce man to the position of a helpless puppet and sanctify evil as a means to the glory of God. I have always found it hard to understand why the barbarically cruel theologies of St. Augustine, Calvin, and Jonathan Edwards should be considered orthodox and canonical, while Marcion, who was driven into dualism by his truly Christian feelings, was considered a heretic. I am sure that many humanists have been driven to their present attitude by a thoroughly justifiable reaction against the morally paralyzing effect of certain types of theology that were prevalent before the war; and if I had to choose between their position and the one they are reacting against, I might well choose humanism as the more truly Christian position.

I hope it is clear, then, that I am not gloating maliciously over the humanists when I point out the fact that they are in a serious

dilemma, any more than Dr. Justin Wroe Nixon was gloating over his fellow modernists when he sought to clarify the difficulties in which *they* found themselves. After all, the problem of the humanist is the problem that we all must face today: how to adjust our religious concepts so as to square with the valid results of the natural and social sciences, while at the same time retaining and if possible enhancing our appreciation of human values, and our consecration to the cause of the progressive enrichment of human life. Let us, then, endeavor to project ourselves sympathetically into the humanist position, and try whether we can solve that problem while remaining in that position.

I

First of all, let us define the humanist position as exactly as possible. In view of the

confusion which still prevails in the humanist camp, it will be necessary for us to construct a somewhat arbitrary picture of the typical humanist, which we shall take as the starting point of our discussion, while recognizing the existence of important variations from that type. To avoid artificiality as much as possible, let us begin with a quotation from a book which is exercising a large and growing influence among the humanists—*Things and Ideals*, by Professor Max Otto of Wisconsin (Henry Holt & Co., Inc.):

> It is thus a constructive social suggestion that we endeavor to give up, as the basis of our desire to win a satisfactory life, the quest for the companionship with a being behind or within the fleeting aspect of nature; that we assume the universe to be indifferent toward the human venture that means everything to us; that we acknowledge ourselves to be adrift in infinite space on our little earth, the sole custodians of our ideals. There need be no spirit of defiance in this. . . . Defi-

ance testifies that the challenge has not really been accepted. No; accept the stern condition of being psychically alone in space and time, that we may then, with new zest, enter the warm valley of earthly existence—warm with human impulse, aspiration, and affection, warm with the unconquerable thing called life; turn from the recognition of our cosmic isolation to a new sense of human togetherness, and so discover in a growing human solidarity, in a progressively ennobled humanity, in an increasing joy in living, the goal we have all along blindly sought, and build on earth the fair city we have looked for in a compensatory world beyond.[2]

Professor Otto has here given noble expression to an attitude which might most simply be described as *a combination of social idealism with cosmic naturalism*; or, to quote Dr. Nixon again, "a naturalism in metaphysics and a pure humanism in ethics." This attitude seems to me to be the very core and

[2] Pages 289-290; extract from the remarkable chapter on "The Hunger for Cosmic Support."

essence of humanism; and the major tenets of the movement can be logically derived from it. Take, for example, the four fundamental tenets of humanism as stated by Dr. John H. Dietrich: [3] (1) the conviction that man, as "the highest product of the creative process," with "nothing above or beyond him" but his own ideals, is "an end in himself" and "not a mere means for carrying out the purposes of a superior being"; (2) "faith in the possibility of improving human life"; (3) "belief in the essential unity of mankind, and the necessity of bringing men to a consciousness of this unity"; (4) "faith in man —belief that the power to realize these great

[3] *Humanist Sermons,* edited by Curtis Reese, pp. 102-113, published by The Open Court Publishing Company, Chicago. Cf. Dr. Reese's own statement in the Preface, pp. viii-xv. In a later statement (*The Humanist Pulpit,* Vol. I, pp. 44-48) Dr. Dietrich retains three of these tenets in a different order, and replaces the unity of mankind with another principle which he evidently considers more fundamental: "the effort to understand human experience by means of human inquiry" (instead of divine revelation).

ideals lies in man himself," and not in any "friendly Providence" or "miracle-working God." All of these four tenets are clearly implied in Professor Otto's statement; and we are quite safe, therefore, in taking it as a classical expression of the humanist attitude.

It may help us to sense the full implications of this attitude if we note certain analogies to it in recent philosophy. The example which first leaps to the mind is Auguste Comte, whose positivistic philosophy was, precisely, "a combination of social idealism with cosmic naturalism." The humanists are conscious of this analogy; but they point out, quite correctly, that Comte's "Religion of Humanity" was an attempt to parallel orthodox Christianity point by point, destroying nothing that was not replaced by at least its symbolic equivalent—a kind of modernistic device to which the humanists would scorn to

resort. Closely related to the positivist position is that of Felix Adler, Stanton Coit, and other leaders of the Ethical Culture Movement, who may in fact be regarded as the immediate forerunners of the humanist movement among the Unitarians and the Jews. Here again the humanists would be glad to acknowledge their indebtedness; but many of them would be inclined to object to Felix Adler's attempt to replace God with an Eternal Spiritual Society, and Stanton Coit's attempt to retain the words God and Prayer, while radically transforming their significance.

A still more important analogy is that between humanism and what I may be permitted to call "left-wing pragmatism." By this I do *not* mean to refer to the "humanism" of Mr. F. C. S. Schiller, which he defines as "unavoidable and salutary anthropomor-

phism,"[4] or "a reform of logic which removes the unwarranted *tabu* put on the personal side of knowing."[5] Mr. Schiller is what I should call a "right-wing pragmatist." Like Professor Lyman, he believes that we possess, in the richness of our moral and religious experience, a source of cosmic insight which is needed to supplement the bare reports of the physical sciences. This is precisely the kind of anthropomorphism which the Unitarian humanists regard as a last vestige of primitive animism; and I am therefore much surprised to find Mr. Curtis Reese (deceived, apparently, by mere terminology) repeatedly referring to Mr. Schiller as if he were an adherent of the new movement. I am sure that Mr. Schiller would be much more

[4] *Riddles of the Sphinx,* by F. C. S. Schiller, p. 145. New York, The Macmillan Company, new and revised edition, 1910.

[5] Muirhead, *Contemporary British Philosophy,* Vol. I, p. 408. (Essay by Schiller entitled "Why Humanism?") New York, The Macmillan Company.

at home in Boston University or the University of Southern California, amongst the personalists, than he would be in any humanist assemblage. No, by "left-wing pragmatism" I mean Chicago pragmatism, which—at least in its earlier period—was characterized by a tendency to make the promotion of social well-being the chief aim of philosophy, and to stretch the significance of social categories until they became inclusive enough to take in the whole cosmos as a minor subhead.[6] Between the position which Professor Ames, the religious leader of the Chicago pragmatists,[7] maintained for many years and that which

[6] Woodbridge Riley has a rather wicked remark in his *American Thought*, to the effect that this school was apparently trying to make the cosmos a mere suburb of Greater Chicago. This jibe has less point today than it had twenty years ago.

[7] I say nothing of John Dewey, the father of Chicago pragmatism, for he is so vague and circumspect in his utterances upon religious themes that it is almost impossible to describe his position. The religious implications of Dewey's philosophy have been most clearly developed by Professor Ames.

most of the humanists now maintain, there is direct historical continuity, which should not be obscured by the fact that Professor Ames himself now seems to be moving beyond humanism in the direction of theism.

The connection here is so close that it gives rise to a common misunderstanding, which I wish to clear away before proceeding. It is commonly said that the essential thing in humanism is the tendency to make man artificially independent of the cosmos; and it is apparently assumed that to point out man's inevitable dependence upon cosmic support for the realization of his ideals is enough to discredit humanism as a religion. There was indeed in Professor Ames's earlier position a certain cosmic blindness, due to that curious "exaggeration of the social" which he had caught from Durkheim and the French sociological school, who in turn had caught it from Auguste Comte; but as I read the

writings of our contemporary humanists, they seem to me to be outgrowing this tendency, like Professor Ames himself, and becoming only too keenly conscious of the importance of the cosmic element in religion. Many of them would gladly grant that human ideals and values are events occurring in nature; and all of them would insist upon the importance of adjusting our human enterprises to natural conditions so as to bring cosmic support to our assistance. But—here is the real issue—they unitedly warn us against the folly of reading into the non-human world our own ideals and values, so as to see in it anything remotely corresponding to human will and purpose. Reconcile yourself to the scientific view of the cosmos whether you like it or not, they say; make use of scientific knowledge to coerce nature to do your bidding; do not delude yourself into supposing that there is anything in nature that will work for

human good except by compulsion—or by pure accident. Man is the highest of all concrete realities; there is nothing above him but his own ideals.

All of these analogies help to define the humanist position by bringing out its logical affinities and historical connections; but the only contemporary philosophy which seems to me to express the very essence of humanism is that of Mr. Bertrand Russell; and I therefore wish to conclude this preliminary description of humanism with a brief analysis of his position.

The philosophy of nature is one thing [says Mr. Russell], the philosophy of value is quite another. Nothing but harm can come of confusing them. What we think good, what we should like, has no bearing whatever upon what is. . . . In the philosophy of nature, we are subordinated to nature, the outcome of natural laws, and their victims in the long run. . . . But in the philosophy

of value the situation is reversed. . . . It is we who create value, and our desires which confer value. In this realm we are kings, and we debase our kingship if we bow down to Nature.[8]

"Victims" in the realm of fact; "kings" in the realm of value! —— Mr. Russell's genius for logical clarity has here revealed, as with a bold, swift stroke of the surgeon's knife, the fundamental dualism which underlies the whole philosophy of humanism: an absolute cleavage between the realm of fact (which is objective and belongs to science) and the realm of value (which is purely subjective and human). It is this dualism of fact and value, rather than the dualism of man and nature, which is at the bottom of the humanist paradox. And it is to this fundamental dualism, beyond a doubt, that we must trace the origin of those curious contradictions and

[8] *What I Believe*, pp. 14-17. New York, E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc.

fluctuations of mood to which Mr. Russell is so evidently subject. Sometimes he views man as a part of nature, and then—as in the famous essay on "A Free Man's Worship"—his mood must needs be that of a helpless "victim," breathing noble but futile defiance to the inexorable forces which are about to crush him. Sometimes he views man as the source of all ideal values, and the possessor of a scientific technique that is able to inflict these values on an indifferent universe; and then his mood becomes that of a "king"—indeed it swells beyond all bounds, into a hymn of praise to Man, the new Lord of all creation, as in the following passage from a recent essay of his:

> An attitude of reverence toward the universe . . . is hardly compatible with the modern belief in man's omnipotence through the machine. We do not contemplate the flea; we catch it. The modern point of view is in its infancy, but we may foresee a time when it will lead men to

regard the non-human world in general with as little reverence as we now feel toward the poor flea.[9]

Strange, is it not, that the same scientific knowledge, viewed from one perspective should lead one to an attitude of "unyielding despair," and viewed from another perspective should lead him to the verge of megalomania. Can it be that a philosophy which leads to such wildly contradictory conclusions is sound in its central principles? It is my contention that humanism can escape from these contradictions only by doing one of two things: either by adopting a rigidly consistent naturalism, which will destroy its faith in man; or by affirming the objective validity of human values, which will lead it to a more appreciative view of the non-human world.

[9] Essay on "Science" in Beard's *Whither Mankind*, p. 66. New York, Longmans, Green & Co.

II

So far as the militant leaders of Unitarian humanism are concerned, it is to the former of these two alternatives that they are the more likely to be driven. They have committed themselves, up to the hilt, to the principle that scientific truth is all the truth there is; and they can hardly abandon this principle (which they have been using as an engine of assault against orthodoxy) when it begins to lead to consequences unpalatable to themselves.

I suspect that Dr. Dietrich, who claims to have been the originator of the humanist movement, may be the first to haul down his colors and capitulate to the "Futilitarians." In his sermon entitled "Will Science Destroy Religion?" he calls the attention of his fellow humanists to the fact that science, having required them to reconstruct their idea of God,

now requires them to do the same with their idea of man:

> The armies of science are moving upon the citadel of the soul and of free will from every direction—biology, psychology, sociology, philosophy. The whole trend of thought in science today is that man is a purely physical creature and that the processes of life are purely mechanical, and in time will be reduced to a problem in chemistry. . . . What the result will be, I do not know. Of one thing only can we be sure, and that is that liberal religion has no future save as it remains utterly faithful to the scientific spirit. . . . Science is our teacher. Its method marks the one sure road to truth. We must follow this road straight through to the very end, though it seems to lead to chaos. Personally, I believe that science will lead us not to chaos but to order.[10]

There is something touching about a faith in science that goes as far as this—"Though

[10] *Humanist Pulpit,* Vol. II, pp. 174, 175. Minneapolis, First Unitarian Society.

it slay me, yet will I trust in it." Would that no man with a faith like this might ever find himself disappointed! Would that Dr. Dietrich might continue to believe in science as his infallible guide to faith and practice, clinging to it as the Catholic clings to his church and the fundamentalist to his Bible, and never find his religious fervor beginning to evaporate! Yet I fear that he is destined before long to discover that science is a "False Messiah," and to experience that "Disillusionment with the Laboratory" of which Mr. Joseph Wood Krutch has written with such power. What his reaction to this disillusionment will be, I do not venture to predict. I hope his faith in man will somehow survive.

Dr. Reese, co-founder of the humanist movement with Dr. Dietrich, appears to be somewhat more skeptical about the all-sufficiency of science as a guide to life. In his book

on *Humanism*, he complains that a church which lays the supreme emphasis upon freedom of thought and scientific examination tends to be deficient in "humanistic purpose" and "humanistic sympathy"; and he maintains that the "unbiased attitude" of science must frankly be deserted at times, if the church is to count for social welfare.

If the scientific spirit and the free church idea were universal in churches [he says] that alone would guarantee neither purpose nor goals. We say that America is a free country, but we know that its freedom would not justify the government in employing representatives to teach autocracy. By American freedom we mean opportunity to experiment in democracy. There are certain general attitudes toward life within which there may be no end of freedom, but freedom becomes a tragedy when it leads to the support of contradictory attitudes toward life.[11]

[11] *Humanism*, p. 69. Chicago, Open Court Publishing Company.

One cannot help sympathizing with Dr. Reese's desire to combine an attitude of moral earnestness with an attitude of intellectual freedom; but one hardly feels that the problem can be solved by this sort of ethical dogmatism. The problem goes deeper. It involves the question whether in the world of science, taken to be the whole real world, moral values or any other kind of values have any significance whatsoever; whether man, taken to be simply a bundle of biological impulses, can be expected to display that "exultant thrill of enlistment and service," that "concentration and directness of purpose," that "conscious committal and loyalty to worthful causes and goals" [12] to which Dr. Reese summons him. These are difficulties which Dr. Reese has apparently never faced. Disillusioned in his theology, he has remained entirely naïve in his ethics; and neither the

[12] *Ibid.*, pp. 41-46.

war nor its aftermath of disappointment has made the least dent in his social optimism. All the old war-worn slogans and platitudes, about "service" and "sacrifice" for "a sober country and a stainless flag," are preserved unaltered in his pages; and he even dares to tell stories about "soldier boys" dying in the endeavor to "make good for democracy." [13] If he has seen "The Big Parade" or read *All Quiet on the Western Front*, he has quite failed to take in their significance. I do not, of course, mean to defend all the excesses of our present skepticism and disillusionment—I think that our present attitude toward social idealism represents a temporary and pathological reaction—but I do wish to point out that Dr. Reese is quite defenseless against it.

Dr. Dietrich and Dr. Reese may in fact be taken as outstanding examples of a type of mentality which has played an important part

[13] *Ibid.*

in the history of American Unitarianism—a type characterized by the keenness and vigor of its destructive criticisms, and the naïve dogmatism of its positive convictions. When I read the works of Theodore Parker—perhaps the greatest mind of this type that America has ever produced—I hardly know whether to marvel the more at the acuteness with which he lays bare the weaknesses of traditional theology and the inconsistencies of contemporary liberalism, or at the lack of discrimination which he displays when he comes to formulate his own creed. If there is anything more incredible, to a critical intelligence, than Theodore Parker's theory of the absolute perfection of the universe, I do not know what it is—unless it be the optimistic creed which was developed a little later, partly under his influence, by the Christian Scientist and New Thought movements.

Now the present humanist movement rep-

resents the continuation of the Parker tradition. Parker rejected miracle and the supernatural, and put his trust in an immanent God of Law and Order, whose providential control guaranteed the non-existence of evil and the immortality of the soul. Contemporary humanism rejects God and immortality, and puts its trust in man, and the science he has created. But this type of mentality cannot stop here; so long as any kind of faith remains, it still has work to do. Its next task, obviously, is to dissolve all faith in man, which in the present state of human affairs should be a short and easy piece of work. Faith in science cannot long survive faith in man; and, this last illusion dissipated, there will be nothing left for these critical minds to survey but the universal ruin they have created. May they then be able to take satisfaction, with Mr. Krutch, in the consideration that "whatever else we may be, we are

no longer dupes"; and may they have the courage to conclude, with him, that "we would rather die as men than live as animals." [14] Before this final consummation has been reached, however, they will probably have been deserted by most of their followers, who will have begun to suspect that there is something wrong, somewhere, with a line of reasoning that leads to such a conclusion.

III

Is humanism, then, inevitably destined to pursue the kind of "rake's progress" which has just been depicted? By no means. All we can fairly say is that the logic of naturalism, to which the humanists are committed, gravitates powerfully in that direction, and that the more militant leaders of the movement are neither clearly aware of their danger nor

[14] *The Modern Temper,* concluding paragraphs. New York, Harcourt, Brace & Co.

prepared to protect themselves against it. But not all humanists are so blind. Many of them have already passed through the zero-point of disillusionment, and have drawn from that chastening experience a deep concern over the problem of how our human values may be protected against the cosmic chill. These are not militant iconoclasts; they are not exultant over the destruction of the old faith; they realize all too keenly how much they have lost. "You see, we have only each other"—no one who has heard Professor A. Eustace Haydon pronounce that poignant phrase in which his sad little creed is summarized can ever speak harshly or unsympathetically about the type of humanism he represents. To make the best of our orphaned and destitute state, and be kind to one another ere we perish—this is not a creed to set the world on fire; but if we be driven to it by what seem to be the requirements of intellectual candor, what

nobler creed can we adopt? Professor Haydon's creed sounds meager beside the exultant man-worship of the militant humanists; and yet I feel that he is really farther advanced than they on the way that leads to a durable and stable philosophy of life. They are riding for a fall; he has already gone through the nadir-point of the Inferno, and, like Dante, found there a little passage leading back to light and life on the other side of the earth.[15]

Somewhat farther on beyond the nadir-point—let us say, halfway up the Mount of Purgatory!—we encounter Mr. Walter Lippmann. One almost hesitates to apply to him the same party label which is being used by Messrs. Dietrich, Potter and Slaten, for he has never been a good party man, and he has roasted these iconoclasts to a turn—without

[15] See his recent book, *The Quest of the Ages*. New York, Harper & Brothers, in which he seems to be rapidly pressing on towards a more positive and joyous affirmation of life.

mentioning them by name—in his memorable opening chapter to *A Preface to Morals*; yet he accepts the label himself, and thereby greatly expands its significance. With him, it comes to signify neither a half-wrecked mansion still in process of demolition nor a hastily improvised shelter against the cosmic blasts, but a new habitation for the spirit, built on broad and firm foundations, still in process of construction, but already providing pretty fair quarters to live in while the work goes on.

Mr. Lippmann's position constitutes, in my opinion, not only an excellent "preface to morals," but an indispensable preface to theology. I might even go so far as to say that no minister is properly equipped to serve the needs of the present generation who has not made a comparative study of Mr. Krutch's *Modern Temper* and Mr. Lippmann's *Preface to Morals*, noting carefully the points at

which the latter marks an advance over the former. Such a study would at the very least guarantee the religious thinker against the vicious tendency—fostered, I am afraid, to some extent, by right-wing pragmatism—to assume that the real world must somehow turn out to be identical with the world of our childish and undisciplined desires: a world of toys and sugar-plums, governed by a celestial Santa Claus. Clearly, it is the theologian's first business to face reality with perfect intellectual candor. If, on the contrary, he manifests a preference to "dream on forever" rather than brave the chilly atmosphere of the real world, he is sure to be set down as a moral coward, whose views are not worth a moment's consideration by any mature and enlightened mind. No, let the world turn out to be whatever it may be, desire can and must be adjusted to fit the facts, as Mr. Lippmann recommends.

It may reasonably be asked, however, whether the very success of Mr. Lippmann's polemic against the utter disillusionment of Mr. Krutch does not imply the possibility of a less chilly view of the cosmos than either of these thinkers adopts. To escape from the danger of supposing that the world is just what we desire it to be, must we assume that the world is always just contrary to what we desire it to be? Does not Mr. Lippmann himself grant that when man's desires are harmoniously organized and rationally disciplined, they bring men into what he calls, significantly enough, "a mature and disinterested partnership with their world"?[16] If it be true that the human personality at its best, purged of self-interest and childish longings, regenerate and chastened, can reach out confidently towards its world and enter into an

[16] *A Preface to Morals*, p. 313. New York, The Macmillan Company.

experience of "partnership," does this not mean that the quest of cosmic support and the endeavor to think of the Source of Good in cosmic as well as human terms is legitimate and necessary?

The phrase I have just quoted is the concluding phrase of the chapter in which the constructive part of Mr. Lippmann's argument comes to its culmination, the remarkable chapter on "Love in the Great Society." If one wishes to measure the full extent of his contribution toward placing human values and ethical standards on a firm rational basis, one need only compare this chapter with the corresponding chapter of Mr. Krutch's book, on "Love: or the Life and Death of a Value." As over against a "generally devaluated world" in which "nothing connects itself very much with anything else," and in which love "yields only a momentary pleasure" be-

cause it is defined as "the pleasure of a moment," [17] Mr. Lippmann gives us a world full of meaning and value precisely because it is a world full of organic connections, in which love has lasting significance because it is connected with the business of home-making, and home-making has significance because it is connected with the business of creating a Great Society. Now I do not see how the logic of Mr. Lippmann's argument can permit him to stop here. Is the realm of organic connections coextensive only with the realm of human social relations? Is man not organically connected with his cosmic environment? If the meaning of individual existence is enhanced by its social interconnections, may not the total meaning of human life be enhanced by its cosmic interconnections? And may not God, defined as Mr.

[17] Mr. Lippmann's own summary of Mr. Krutch's position. *Ibid.*, p. 304.

Lippmann is willing to define him, in terms of the Good, turn out to be more-than-human?

If Mr. Lippmann is held back from following his own logic to its ultimate conclusions, I am persuaded that it is because he is still a victim of that falsely sharp distinction between the philosophy of nature and the philosophy of values which, as we saw, is so fundamental a feature of the humanist position. This is evidenced in the ambiguity of his favorite word "disinterested." When he faces toward nature, he appears to take an attitude which is "disinterested" in the sense of being imperturbable, indifferent, free from frustration because entirely free from hope and faith. When he turns to consider the large concerns of business and politics, he recommends that the statesman adopt an attitude which is "disinterested" in another sense: free from prejudice and self-seeking, but certainly not wholly free from faith in human

nature or hope of a happier human destiny. When, finally, he comes to the intimate personal relations of men and women, he finds the word "disinterested" more or less of an incubus (try if you can, to imagine a "disinterested" lover) and in a burst of frankness at the end of the chapter he agrees with Dean Inge that *not* cool disinterestedness, but "personal affection for man," is the path that leads to moral salvation.

I do not believe that this dualism in Mr. Lippmann's thought will be able to maintain itself in the face of careful analysis. A cold and suspicious attitude toward the cosmos is hard to combine with a trustful and affectionate attitude toward human beings. Either trust and affection will radiate out into nature or what we may call "cosmic imperialism" will trickle down into human relations. It would seem that Mr. Lippmann has not fully caught the implications of the philos-

ophy of Professor Whitehead, whom he cites so often. If Professor Whitehead is right, our modern "bifurcation of nature" into a realm of facts and a realm of values is wholly fallacious. Values are indeed relative to human desires, but the relativity of human values is only a special form of that general relativity which springs from the universal "prehensive" interrelatedness of all events. From this point of view, nature is no bare physical mechanism, devoid of meaning and value, but an organic system in which beauty, goodness, and intelligence, as well as mass and velocity, are objectively inherent.

Sooner or later, I believe, the stuffy subjectivism of modern philosophic thought—an evil inheritance from Descartes, which Kant only fastened upon us in his endeavor to shake it off—is destined to give way to a more confidently realistic philosophy, which will reunite facts and values, things and

ideals, efficient and final causes, in a cosmology somewhat reminiscent of Aristotle.[18] What will then happen to humanism we may infer from the new developments in the philosophy of Professor Ames, who, in his recent book on *Religion*, seems to be moving out beyond humanism in precisely the direction indicated. If Mr. Lippmann carries us halfway up the Mount of Purgatory, Professor Ames carries us clean out into the cosmic spaces—new territory for him!—where he finds an "order, power and beauty" [19] that most mightily supports our highest human values. All that is valid in the logic of humanism finds its fulfillment in this new position of Professor Ames, as all that is fallacious in

[18] When Whitehead's *Science and the Modern World* first appeared, one of my Oberlin colleagues said to me, "Why, this is pure scholasticism!" It may well be that modern philosophy is coming back, by a long circuit, to a point not far removed from the point at which it began to diverge from the classical Platonic-Aristotelian tradition!

[19] *Religion,* p. 152. New York, Henry Holt & Co., Inc.

it finds its fulfillment in the position of Mr. Krutch. We may, therefore, appropriately close our discussion with a quotation from Professor Ames, in which, one might say, humanism pronounces a final judgment upon its own limitations:

> The idea of God may thus be seen to express more than the mere projection of human ideals, for that expression still carries within it the old dualism between an alien cosmos and man's little world of interests and values. . . . Many advocates of modern "humanism" commit this fallacy of supposing that one term of a dualistic conception may be dropped while retaining the other. . . . Denying the existence of God and the supernatural . . . they are left with a truncated world, and the lower half of the old dualistic order. They have unwittingly separated man from nature with the same stroke, and have left their humanistic realm suspended between the void of matter on the one side and the vacancy left on the other by the removal of the old supernaturalistic deity.[20]

[20] *Ibid.*, pp. 173-175.

What next, then? If Professor Ames is right, we live and move and have our being not in a world of soulless mechanism, from which we occasionally take refuge in a world of fruitless dreams, but in a world shot through with value and with meaning, both actual and potential; and such a world opens up to us a limitless and enticing field for theological exploration. It will be our ensuing task to venture forth into this vast territory and to report, as candidly and objectively as we may, what we find there that is worthy to be called divine.

CHAPTER III

The God of Human Experience

WE HAVE now, for what appear to be good and sufficient reasons, left humanism as a religious system behind us, judging it to be based upon a fallacious dualism between facts and values, things and ideals, which the progress of philosophic analysis is tending to abolish. Does this mean that we have now disposed of humanism entirely? May we regard it merely as an exposed fallacy, an exploded theory, a pricked bubble, that has simply vanished, leaving no residue of truth behind?

Any such attitude would be, so to speak, a violation of the Golden Rule. Nothing in the

conduct of the humanists is more annoying to us than their habit of treating theistic and idealistic theories in just this fashion. Let them detect a moral flaw or a rational inconsistency in some traditional concept of God or some philosophical concept of the Absolute, and they promptly rush to the conclusion that all such concepts are empty of meaning, that they are mere figments of human imagination, with no objective validity whatsoever. Not many months ago, an eminent humanist made in my hearing substantially the following statement: "We now *know*, in the light of the history of religion, which reveals to us a constantly changing God-concept, always relative to particular human needs and social situations—we now *know* that the idea of God is simply a human idea." Now to those of us who have not been initiated into the sect of the humanists, that

sounds like queer reasoning. If the changeability and relativity of an idea proved its complete lack of objective validity, then we should be condemned to be subjective idealists; for all our ideas are changeable and relative. Applying this test to recent physical theories, we should be obliged to conclude that atoms and molecules, electrons and protons, were nothing but ideas in the human mind, and there was in fact no physical world at all.[1]

[1] Professor Eddington, in his book *The Nature of the Physical World*, does much to cast doubt upon the absolute validity of physical theories. Yet he concludes by warning us against supposing that the destruction of a theory involves the destruction of the facts and principles on which it is based. Scientific theories, he points out, are like the successive hypotheses which a man working on a vast and complicated jig-saw puzzle might hazard from time to time, in the effort to guess at what the completed picture was to be. The destruction of such hypotheses does not require him to take apart the pieces of the puzzle which have already been fitted together. So, one might say, the discarding of outworn ideas of God does not imply that they had no basis in reality, but rather that they were warped and incomplete views, based on an inadequate survey of reality.

But if we object to this sort of reasoning when applied to theism, we ought in turn to hesitate to apply it to humanism. We ought rather to recognize that, no matter how many fallacies may be involved in the humanist case as now presented, it nevertheless represents powerful considerations which cannot fairly be ignored. Must we not say, in fact, that both of the characteristic emphases of humanism—its demand that religion be brought into harmony with the scientific spirit and its demand that religion become "humane," in the fullest sense of that rich old word—must we not say that theistic religion needs to adopt both of these emphases as its own, if it is really to meet the challenge presented by humanistic religion? Let us, then, begin our approach to the construction of a reasonable theistic creed by inquiring what it would mean for theism to become truly scientific and truly humane.

I

A promising attempt at a solution of our problem will be found in a little book entitled *Religion in an Age of Science*, by Professor E. A. Burtt, of the University of Chicago. Professor Burtt finds the underlying cause of the conflict between science and religion not in any of those specific contradictions between scientific theory and religious dogma which have periodically resulted in controversy, but in a fundamental diversity of ideals and attitudes. On the one side, the scientific ideal of empirical tentativeness, with its demand that nothing be accepted as true until it has met the test of universal social verification; on the other side, the religious ideal of loyal obedience to revealed truth, embodied in a special religious tradition. He suggests in his concluding chapter that Christianity can never fulfill its own mis-

sion of creating a world-unifying society—in other words, it can never become fully *humane*—until it severs the bonds of unquestioning loyalty which tie it to a sectarian tradition, and becomes thoroughly tentative and empirical in its approach to theological questions. Applied to the idea of God, this ideal would involve two requirements, in which the two great demands of the humanists seem to me to be excellently expressed: (1) that "for an age seeking to progress in intelligence and in sincerity of purpose . . . its object of worship should be identical with, or at least include without inconsistency, the supreme ideal of goodness which that age has been able to conceive";[2] (2) that any idea of God be abandoned which could not under proper conditions be verified in *every* normal human experience.

[2] *Religion in an Age of Science*, p. 132. New York, Frederick A. Stokes Company.

We think of God [says Professor Burtt] as a being who possesses universal validity. What does that mean? Well, it means among other things that we think of him as the one God of the whole universe rightfully claiming the worship of every soul. Now if this is the case he ought to be able to approve himself to the sincere search of every soul; if the experience of any human being is inevitably such that God cannot be discovered in it, the conception of God is then no more valid for anybody else than it is for him—the universality which is an intrinsic part of the conception is lost.[2]

Professor Burtt's conclusion is that since God is not actually discovered by all men, the idea of God is not at present scientifically valid, and that if it can be validated in the future, it will not be by theological argumentation, but by removing those evil conditions which now make it impossible for some people to experience God. I should be inclined

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 151.

to assert, on the contrary, that there is a sense in which all men do now in various degrees experience God, and that it is the primary task of a truly humane and scientific theology to describe this universal human experience of God as exactly as possible. This accomplished, there still remains the task of describing the higher reaches of religious experience and religious faith which are peculiar to our own religion. We hope eventually, partly by words, and partly, as Professor Burtt suggests, by deeds, to share this experience and faith with the whole human race, a process which will doubtless involve the correction and enlargement as well as the confirmation of our present beliefs. This is the sequence of thought I plan to pursue in this and the succeeding chapter.

The distinction between the God of human experience and the God of Christian faith, on which I am basing the division between

these last two chapters, is somewhat reminiscent of the old distinction between natural theology and Christian revelation. Since the time of Ritschl, natural theology has been out of style in liberal Protestant circles. It is claimed, and not without reason, that the old natural theology, with its rational proofs of the existence of God, failed utterly to appreciate the religious significance of the word "God." Its arguments issued in the conception of a Prime Mover, or First Cause, or Great Designer, so remote from the religious needs of men that it was a serious problem how to trace any connection between the God of natural theology and the loving Father of Christian revelation. I have no desire to revive natural theology in its eighteenth-century form, but I think Ritschl was unwise in seeking to abolish it altogether, in favor of a theology which took its stand wholly within the Christian tradition, and found God only

in Christ.[4] When Christians claim a monopoly of the knowledge of God, non-Christians may be pardoned for regarding the Christian God as a subjective delusion peculiar to Christians. What is most needed if the controversies of our time are to lead to genuine enlightenment is a new natural theology, not beginning with nature but with religious experience, not rationalistic but empirical in method. What is needed is a broad platform of empirical agreement on which all parties to the controversy may take their stand while they confer about their differences, giving to all the assurance that, even if they should be obliged

[4] For Ritschl's rejection of natural theology, see the opening pages of his *Justification and Reconciliation* (Vol. III of the German work). My colleague, Dr. F. H. Foster, when a young student in Germany, made a remark in Ritschl's presence about natural theology. "Natural theology!" snapped out Ritschl, "there's no such thing!" By his rejection of natural theology and his emphasis upon religious value-judgments, Ritschl was led to a dualism of things and ideals which helped pave the way for humanism. See McGiffert, *Rise of Modern Religious Ideas*, p. 139.

to alter their positions, they would still have something to stand on.

This new empirical theology is already in the making. Among the books which have contributed most to its making, I would name Hocking's *Meaning of God in Human Experience*, Professor Lyman's *Experience of God in Modern Life*, Professor Macintosh's *Theology as an Empirical Science*, and Professor H. N. Wieman's much-discussed writings. Common to all these thinkers is the tendency to regard God, provisionally at least, not as a Being behind and apart from the world of human experience, but rather as a Being revealed *in* human experience, a Dependable Factor in it which can be isolated by scientific analysis just as one isolates chemical elements or bacteria or vitamines. The method of isolation is most clearly illustrated in the mode of procedure followed by Professor Wieman in his successive publica-

tions. Beginning with a definition of God growing out of religious experience but so broad that any atheist could accept it, he uses this definition as a tool of investigation, until he has acquired enough data to define the nature of God more precisely. Whereupon he uses his new definition as a means of discovering new data which may result in its expansion or correction. All definitions so far offered by Professor Wieman are to be regarded as partial ones. This tentativeness in his thinking must be irksome to his more ardently religious readers; but to readers in quest of religious certitude these partial definitions have the great advantage of being almost certainly true as far as they go.

Now, I find myself in hearty sympathy with this general mode of procedure; and I invite you to participate with me in a brief rehearsal of the expanding movement of thought which it implies. We shall be obliged to move

too rapidly to make our observations with detailed scientific accuracy; but we may at least preserve an attitude of scientific tentativeness. And we may thus hit upon rough descriptive formulas and working hypotheses that may be of use to other investigators.

II

It is important that our preliminary definition of God be as true as possible to universal religious experience, for the God we are seeking is not the God of philosophy but the God of religion. Ultimately, of course, the philosophic quest for a highest principle of explanation converges with the religious quest for a highest object of devotion; but at their starting points the two quests are divergent. Pascal saw deeply into the causes of confusion in religious thinking when, in his

greatest moment of spiritual illumination, he cried out, "God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob—*not* the God of the philosophers and the savants." Let us then take care to derive our preliminary definition of God from a concrete religious experience; and let us take the case of that passionate seeker after God, Leo Tolstoy. Professor Lyman has called attention to the interaction between Tolstoy's experience of God and his experience of moral creativity. I wish to call attention primarily to another feature of his experience: the precise correlation between his experience of God and his sense of an abundance of vital energy, giving worthfulness and meaningfulness to his whole existence.

When Tolstoy was about fifty years old, he found life suddenly beginning to go stale on his hands; and he spent two years delving into religious questions, to see if there was

enough meaning in the universe to make it reasonable to go on living. For a time he found no light; and he tells us that he had to hide the rope lest he should hang himself to the rafters of his room. The turning point came one day when he was walking alone in the forest, debating with himself about the belief in God, wondering how he ever came by the idea of God in the first place. He noticed that every time the thought of God came to him, there came an uprush of vital energy within him, and life took on meaning and beauty for the moment. "Why do I look farther?" he said to himself. "He is there: *he, without whom one cannot live.* To acknowledge God and to live are one and the same thing. God is what life is. Well, then! live, seek God, and there will be no life without him." And whereas up to that moment his "energy of life" had steadily ebbed toward the verge of black suicidal despair, it now

began slowly to mount again, bringing with it a fresh interest in life.[5]

God is "he, without whom one cannot live." Could one in so few words better express the religious conception of God? The God of religion is not first of all an explanatory concept, like the God of philosophy. He is first of all a great Resource. In the picturesque language of the Psalmists, God is a "sword," a "shield and buckler," a "very present help in trouble," whereby a man may be "girded with strength" so as to "run through a troop" or "leap over a wall." *God, in other words, is that which I must rely upon if I am to succeed in my quest for the good life;* that which, when I open the flood-gates of my soul to its incoming, makes the tide of life to mount within me, till all my existence is full of meaning; that without which the tide of

[5] William James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 185. (Italics mine.) New York, Longmans, Green & Co.

life begins to ebb within me, till all my existence becomes flat, stale, and unprofitable. God, whatever else he may be, must be defined as *the source of those vital energies that tend to keep me at my best.* God is "he, without whom one cannot live."

Does this mean that the chief end of God is to glorify man and support him forever? Does it mean that man's chief relation to his gods is as Professor Leuba says, to "use" them? Is God a resource for the enrichment of human life, in a sense which permits man to exploit God with perfect *sang-froid*, as he exploits coal, oil, water power, and other natural resources? A definition of God which implied any such conclusions would be false to universal religious experience. Everywhere and always, the gods have been more than utilitarian devices. They have been objects of reverent devotion, regarded as worthful in themselves; and they have apparently done

most for man when he has most completely forgotten himself in their contemplation and in their service. The experience of the divine typically begins in an experience of self-abasement before a Being recognized as more worthful than the Self; it proceeds to a climax of adoration in which the Self is gladly committed to the service of the divine Object; it issues in that sense of renewed energy and enlarged selfhood which Tolstoy describes, but only in proportion to the completeness of the self-abasement and self-committal which have gone before. We must, therefore, amend our original definition, to read somewhat as follows: *God is that supremely worthful Being by devotion to Which (or Whom) man may attain the most vigorous vitality and the highest degree of selfhood of which he is capable.*

Let us now fare forth into the world in quest of a Being answering to this descrip-

tion. Remember, we are not prejudging anything; we are only looking. Perhaps the most worthful being in the world will turn out to be Humanity. In that case, humanity will be our God. But if we discover anything more worthful than humanity, then *that* must be our God; and it must become our chief end to glorify and enjoy that God as long as we have being. Lest we overlook anything important, let us begin looking close to ourselves, and not stop looking until we reach the utmost limits of the known world. And let us embody whatever we discover that is divine in a provisional definition of God, which may be revised and expanded if we later discover anything of higher worth.

Are you ready to proceed? Very well; the search is begun! And here already is something divine—so close at hand that it almost escapes observation. I will put it at once into a first provisional definition of God:

1. *God is my own Better Self.*

What I call my Self might almost be described as a series of selves, a kaleidoscopic succession of acts and attitudes bound loosely together by certain recurrent habits, memories, and purposes. In some moments of clear vision and firm decision, the self becomes a close-knit unity; it *is* its own central life-purpose, behind which all the elements of personality are mobilized in orderly array. Then it is that I say my better self is in command. But those moments do not last. Physical fatigue and the inevitable distractions of daily life soon break up the unity of the self. Although my great moments leave some deposit of memory and habits, they do not release me from the steady drag and pull of that leaden load of aboriginal laziness which we are all condemned, like Sisyphus, to roll uphill each day of our lives; nor do they prevent the possibility that, under stress of circumstances, I

may be carried away by some blind instinctive drive which, if it gets out of hand, may wreck the unity of the self completely. What am I to do in such moments of dull inertia or sudden stress? Obviously, the first thing to do is, as we say, to "get hold of myself," to "pull myself together"; and that means to appeal from my narrower and weaker self to my wiser and stronger self. My first and nearest resource in time of need, or, so to speak, the closest part of God, is the best part of myself, *God in me.*

God is my own better self. He is at least that, and I may nail that down for a certainty. But clearly, he is more than that, too; for *who am I?* Am I a self-enclosed, self-dependent, self-sufficient being? Have I anything that I have not received; *am* I anything that has not been communicated to me? Obviously not. Just as my physical organism was built up out of solar energy in the shape of

food, so that body of preferences and purposes which I call my Self was built up out of our common human heritage of custom and aspiration, embodied in persons and institutions. At first passively and blindly, then more and more actively and selectively, I have been receiving the substance of myself from this common heritage since the day of my birth—breathing it in from the atmosphere of home and school and church and nation, taking it in more concentrated form from the personalities of parents, teachers, friends, and heroes. And I must replenish myself daily from the same sources, else I perish. Cut me off from my fellows; put me in solitary confinement, without even a book or a newspaper to maintain my contact with humanity; and you starve my personality as effectively as you would starve my body by withholding food and drink. We are driven, then, to a second pro-

visional definition of God, much wider than the first:

2. *God is all that is best in our human heritage.*

I do not say our *whole* human heritage; for there are evil and degrading influences abroad in human society, and the cardinal principle in thinking about God is, Call nothing God that is not clearly an influence for good, however great and powerful it may be. (We need particularly to keep this principle in mind, since we no longer have a personal devil to guarantee us against forgetting it.) [6]

[6] I do not mean that we are to use our own imperfect human conceptions of goodness as infallible measures of divine goodness; but I agree with Professor Burtt when he says, in a passage already referred to, that the idea of God must at least include our highest human ideal of goodness. Tertullian sinned against this cardinal principle when he said he would rather have a bad God than a weak one. A bad God is a contradiction in terms.—The principle just stated does not prejudice the question of the personality of God; it is simply a restatement of our original definition of God as "that which I must rely upon if I am to succeed in my quest for the good life."

On the other hand, we may find more to ascribe to God in this human heritage of ours than our ancestors, with their narrowly ecclesiastical outlook, were able to see. For them, the river of the grace of God had but one source, in Palestine, and one channel, the Christian Church. To us, it has become clear that the river has many other sources and many other channels. China and India have made mighty contributions to the knowledge of God, which can no longer be ignored; and if you do not feel the presence of God at Hull House or the Assembly of the League of Nations, you certainly will not recognize him when you meet him in church.

The realm marked out by this second provisional definition of God is a vast one, including the whole social life of mankind, past and present; and it is crowded with worthy objects of devotion, able in greater or lesser measure to dignify the lives of their

devotees. Most men have a genuinely religious devotion to their friends and families, whom they would scorn to "use" merely as means to their own selfish satisfaction; and in the lives of their friends and their families they feel their own lives greatly extended in time and space. Some men devote themselves to a business concern or an educational institution with such all-consuming intensity that the name of the firm or the spirit of the college becomes to them an object of veneration; and they too have their reward, in that their personalities grow to the dimensions of the institution they serve. Some men are supremely devoted to their country, and make it the chief object of their lives to see that the national heritage, born of the blood and tears of men long since passed away, and given to them as a free gift, for no desert of theirs, shall be conserved and enhanced, not irreverently dissipated. Surely this is a

high and worthy object of devotion: yet there are some who find, like Edith Cavell, that "patriotism is not enough"; and they devote themselves to causes and movements of a still broader scope, rooted far back in history before the nation was born and reaching on toward a future unification of mankind. Art, philosophy, science, and the great world religions represent causes and movements of this sort, broad as the whole human race; and the man who devotes himself to their advancement is proportionately enriched in his personal life.

Where in this great realm is the supremely worthful object of devotion? That is a question each man must answer for himself. The difficulty is not that there is so little that is worthful, but that there is so much. The lesser divinities capture our loyalty early, and obscure the greater; so that it is only through a slow and painful "dialectic of the will,"

fraught with disappointment and disillusionment, that we learn to discriminate between what is good and what is best. It is easy to be biased by one's own religious background. Yet I confess to a belief that what is objectively best in our whole human heritage is what we call the Hebrew-Christian tradition: the stream of divine compassion and invincible good will which rises in the mountains of Palestine and flows down thence across the centuries, enriched or muddied on the way by many tributaries, but perpetually renewing its purity and its fertility. Amos, Hosea, Jeremiah, Jesus, Francis of Assisi, George Fox, Leo Tolstoy . . . the prophetic line has no end. Beside the prophetic line and secondary only to it I would place the "evangelical" line: Paul, Augustine, Luther, Wesley, General Booth.

I recognize that this great tradition needs purification and enrichment today as it has

never needed it before. I am glad to see the "acids of modernity" eating away from it everything that is base enough to be consumed. I hope to see the scientific spirit and the democratic spirit become part of it, as the Greek philosophic spirit did many centuries ago. And I am thrilled at the thought that today for the first time, in India and China, our Western religious tradition is beginning to mingle its stream with the two great religious traditions of the Far East—perhaps eventually to form a new world religion, as different from our present Christianity as the Christianity which emerged from the Mediterranean melting pot was different from the Jewish Christianity which went into it. But meanwhile, if you should ask what is most divine in all our human heritage, I should answer: "I still know nothing diviner than Christian love at its best, and no institution worthier of a man's unreserved devotion than

the institution which was born of this spirit, and seeks to make it universal. If there be no superhuman deity, if a man is as much alone in the cosmos as many of our contemporaries claim, there still exists a deity great enough to make life worth living: the divine spirit of sacrificial good will which was in the Founder of Christianity, and which survives and grows, even today, as the Spirit in the Church." [7]

Is this as far as we can go in our quest of God? There are many who would say: "Yes, this is the last word. There is nothing higher than man's best. Push on into the cosmic sphere, and you encounter nothing but dead matter. God is the highest quality of life that has emerged in humanity; he is the widening current of good will which, we

[7] It goes without saying, of course, that I find that Spirit outside the confines of the visible church. Professor Royce used to say that he found it better expressed among the scientists than anywhere else.

hope, is to sweep all mankind eventually within the scope of its influence." I believe this is a true definition of God, as far as it goes. But can we stop at this point? Must not the same logic which drives us to seek the source of what is best in ourselves in the human race from which we spring, drive us also to seek the source of what is best in humanity in something beyond humanity? Is the human race, any more than the human organism, a self-dependent, self-sufficient entity? Does it not live in and by its cosmic environment? We cannot, of course, worship nature as a whole, any more than we can worship humanity as a whole, or ourselves as a whole. The roots of what is best in humanity run deep down into nature, and what we have called "the widening current of good will" which runs through human history has its sources far back in biological and cosmic evolution. We are thus led to a third exten-

sion of our own exploration in quest of God, and a third and last provisional definition.

3. *God is a vast cosmic drift or trend toward harmony, fellowship, and mutual aid, whereby our efforts to create a just equilibrium in human affairs are supported and sustained.*

I do not mean to assert the existence of such a cosmic drift as an act of faith; I claim that it is an empirical fact, capable of social verification—a fact as objective as those great star drifts which astronomers are able to chart after years of patient observation. This is a fact of tremendous religious significance, if true. It means that our puny efforts to bring in the reign of justice and peace are sustained by something in the structure of the universe; the stars in their courses fight against war and oppression. If patriotism offers a more inclusive object of worship than is to be found in a narrow devotion to one's

family or one's own business, if loyalty to humanitarian causes gives room for a religious expansion of personality which even patriotism cannot afford, then devotion to a more-than-human cause is, by the same token, highest of all. No lesser deities are flouted in the worship of this supreme deity, for all lesser loyalties are included and reconsecrated in this supreme loyalty.

But does such a cosmic drift really exist? This, I submit, is not a matter for rhetorical argument, but for cool scientific and philosophical inquiry. Just here, the religious quest begins to merge with the philosophic quest, and it begins to appear that the God of religion and the God of philosophy are ultimately the same.

We certainly cannot claim that modern philosophy has arrived at any agreement concerning the ultimate origin, meaning or goal

of the evolutionary process; yet in the welter of rival theories, some facts stand out clearly: Physical units tend to become organized into regular harmonious structures such as atoms, molecules, crystals, and planetary systems; and these harmonious structures tend to resist dissolution with great tenacity. At a certain stage in this process of physical organization, there emerge, by stages not yet clearly traced, structures of a radically new order: living organisms, characterized by an aggressive and adaptable behavior resulting from a far higher degree of differentiation and integration than anything known in the inorganic world. Pressed upon constantly by each other and by environmental conditions, living organisms develop into myriad species, more and more complex in structure; and the higher species, such as the ants, bees, and mammals, develop complicated social organi-

zations, while all the species are bound together in one great "web of life" by adaptive interlinkages. Human history, with its gradual process of social integration, binding clans into tribes, tribes into city-states, city-states into nations and empires, and, with many premature and unsuccessful attempts, reaching out toward the ultimate world-state —human history is only the most recent chapter in the history of a trend toward harmony and coöperation that is as old as the atom.

Take the process of cosmic evolution as naturalistically as you please. Use no teleological terms in describing it; rule out the hypothesis of an immanent Purpose or a guiding Providence; confine yourself to the bare objective fact of an increasing differentiation and integration of structure. Call it, as we have agreed to call it, simply a "drift." Even on this minimum basis, the process has religious meaning; and to define God in terms

of it is to worship a great and exalted deity [8] —too great and too exalted for the ordinary person to grasp. Yet the man on the street as well as the philosopher may know what it means to find divine support in nature. He may find in her a constant and dependable source of physical refreshment and æsthetic enjoyment. And from time to time he may get an intuitive sense that in performing his daily tasks he is serving not only his firm and his family, his country and his race, but something greater yet—something that broods over the whole life of our little planet as the Spirit of the Hive seemed to Maeterlinck to brood over the life of the bee. When he has such intuitions, he is simply feeling out for a conception of nature which science has al-

[8] I had a conversation some years ago with a distinguished psychologist and philosopher, who told me that his religion consisted in the recognition of a trend toward harmony in the cosmos, and the effort to put his conduct in line with that trend. He regarded himself as an atheist; I should call him a theist of a high order.

ready shown to be objectively true: the conception, namely, that human life is but a fragmentary part of "an intelligible cosmos, an orderly flux, an advancing movement in which we share, a process in which there is progress, a world instinct with beauty." [9] Only a falsely "bifurcated" view of nature, ruling out all secondary qualities and values —a view whose fallacy is now pretty well exposed by students of scientific logic— would dispute the literal veracity of such a conception.

We have now apparently reached the limit of our empirical quest. Another step, and we shall be plunged into a sea of metaphysical questions. What is the ultimate nature of this cosmic drift which we are provisionally dignifying with the name of God? Is it just a lucky accident, is it the expression of a blind

[9] J. Arthur Thomson, *Science and Religion*, p. 198. New York, Charles Scribner's Sons.

vital urge, or does it reveal the mighty thrust of an intelligent will? Is God the passive object of our seeking and our devotion, or is there a sense in which he is seeking us? What is the relation between God and Evil—are the two great terms in eternal opposition to each other, or is there a soul of good in things evil, which gives hope of their eventual reclamation? Is the natural order an external limitation upon God, or is it in some sense under divine control? These are questions that will not down, and we shall be obliged to face them in the next chapter. But before pushing on into this final sphere, where the ultimate mysteries have their abode, let us pause to look back over the path we have traversed in our empirical quest.

We have come out through three concentric spheres in our search for God: the sphere of the wider Self, from which the narrower Self periodically draws its sustenance; the

sphere of human society and history, from which even the wider Self must constantly be replenished if it is not to perish; and finally, the sphere of nature, from which humanity emerged by a process of evolution, and on which humanity remains constantly dependent. We have adhered to our resolution to call nothing God that is not clearly an influence for good, and we are consequently under no temptation to make an equation between God and the Whole; but we have discovered more of God in each region we have traversed—"more" in the sense that each of our provisional definitions of God included all that was signified by the preceding, but related it to something more lasting and significant, on which it was dependent.

It should increase our confidence in our findings to note the fact that all religions, from the most primitive to the most refined, have sought and found their objects of

worship in these same three spheres. The Christian doctrine of the Trinity has a wider-than-Christian significance; for the deity revealed in nature, the deity revealed in history, and the deity revealed in immediate inward experience are present in one form or another in all fully developed religious systems. The Chinese "heaven," the Vedic Indra, the great All-Father or Creator worshiped (not too intimately) by many primitive peoples, the fertility deities whose function it is to bring the earth's vegetation to life again in the spring —all such deities belong in the general category indicated by the first person of the Christian Trinity, "God the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and Earth." Other deities bear clearly the marks of their *social* origin—ancestral spirits, deified heroes, tribal or municipal deities like Pallas Athene, who gathered up into a symbol the great social entity more prosaically known as the city of

Athens. These deities correspond to the Christian conception of a Divine Word revealed in a sense in the whole history of mankind, more particularly in the history and prophetic utterances of the Hebrew people, and most clearly in One who was the Word made flesh. Finally, we may see in the reverence universally accorded to certain extraordinary mental states—the prophet's frenzy, the mystic's ecstasy, the trance of the medicine man and the medium—the analogue of the Christian worship of the Holy Spirit.

The progress of human knowledge and of human morals has necessitated many changes in religious concepts. Nature used to be crowded with manlike beings of superhuman strength, who would direct natural forces to man's advantage, if properly supplicated and propitiated. Society used to perpetuate its traditions in most realistic style, through the literal survival of ancestral ghosts who hov-

ered, like a great cloud of witnesses, about the heads of their descendants. Hysteria, epilepsy, and other abnormal mental states used to be regarded as signs of the presence of the Holy Spirit. Today, we are on our guard against all such animistic notions. We have given up the habit of personifying the powers of nature and we no longer hope to control them by oral persuasion or magical ritual. If we still apostrophize the spirit of our college or our country, or the spirits of just men made perfect, we no longer have the impression that ghostly ears are listening to our rhetorical questions. If we still believe that mystical experiences may be channels of divine revelation, it is not because of, but in spite of, the mental abnormalities and the suspension of rational judgment involved therein. Yet the passing of all these superstitions has not left us with a universe devoid of religious significance. Quite apart from the settlement of all

metaphysical questions, we may affirm that we live in a world where man's quest for worthy and soul-stirring objects of devotion is not disappointed, and where the ancient paradox of a God who is at once Ruler of nature and God of our fathers, yet very near to the humble and contrite heart, can still be confirmed in experience.

We have endeavored to put nothing into our conception of the "God of human experience" but that which is empirically certain, or so highly probable that it is practically beyond dispute. We have not included personality, nor infinitude, nor omnipotence in our concept. We have deliberately left its outer fringes shrouded in mystery and metaphysical perplexity. To religious faith, such a concept is bound to seem insufficient. Yet to the man who wishes to subject his faith in God to critical examination from time to

time, such a halfway concept is literally indispensable. How can he get outside his traditional concept of God to criticize it, if he has not some temporary alternative concept of God to live by while he is doing the criticizing? Tolstoy is right: God, in the religious sense, is "he, without whom one cannot live." To suspend the religious act of dependence upon God while endeavoring to settle certain philosophical problems about his ultimate nature would be like postponing eating and breathing while investigating the physiology of digestion and respiration.

The God of philosophy and theology is the object of a literally endless quest. The perfect definition of God will *never* be framed; but we may be empirically certain of the reality of the God of religion. We must depend upon this God of religion, this God of universal human experience, while we dis-

cuss the reality of the God of Christian faith. We *must,* I say; we cannot help ourselves. God, in the religious sense of the word, is to human personality what food and breath are to the body; we sicken and die without him.

CHAPTER IV

The God of Christian Faith

IT IS part of the tragedy of human life—or, if we have the heart to take it so, it is part of life's high adventure—that in all the supreme decisions we have to make, we are obliged to act upon insufficient evidence. In many minor decisions, there is so much evidence available that it yields a close approximation to certitude. If we are trying to decide what sort of heating system to install, or which route to take on a motor trip, or where to go for graduate study in Fine Arts, there is enough evidence, if we only take the time to make sure that no important facts are overlooked. But there are other decisions

of a different order: marriage, choosing a vocation, supporting or refusing to support one's country in time of crisis, or, most inclusive of all, choosing a religion or philosophy of life. Obviously, these are the supreme decisions of life, and should be made in the light of the completest possible survey of the facts. But it is equally obvious that no such complete survey is available, and to wait too long for further information is to run great risk of making precisely the worst possible decision—which is, the decision not to decide. Moreover, many of these decisions have to be made in early life, when ignorance and inexperience add their weight to the inherent difficulties of the problem.

What is to be done in such a case? Shall we treat our partial information as if it were complete, and proceed as if there were no *x*, no unknown quantity in the problem? That is the surest way of arriving at a wrong solu-

tion. We do not know the value of x, but we are sure that an x of some sort is in the equation, and there is no way of eliminating it. The very fact that new information is constantly coming in proves that we must make some allowance for that which is still to come in. What shall we do, then? While it may not be good mathematical procedure, I suggest that the best practical procedure is to make an intuitive approximation to the value of x, and go on using it until a better comes to hand.

The application of this principle to the problem of belief in God is direct. There is no decision in life on which hang more momentous issues than those involved in the choosing of a supreme object of devotion; and yet, there is no problem in which the evidence falls farther short of complete sufficiency. Literally *everything* is germane to the theistic question; and nothing short of omni-

science would suffice to settle it. It is the *whole real world* we have to live in; it is the whole real world which bears down upon every act that we commit, and determines its issue—and between that whole real world and the *known world* there is a vast disparity. We may be sure, therefore, that any conception of God based exclusively upon a close-fitting, cautious interpretation of known facts is not an adequate conception of God. And, judged by this test, our own conception of the "God of Human Experience," which we endeavored to work out step by step without abandoning the attitude of scientific tentativeness, stands convicted of inadequacy.

Does this mean that we had our labor for our pains, and must now throw the product of our labors on the scrap-heap of discarded concepts? No. It still remains a valid and useful concept for certain purposes. It is highly desirable that the towering pinnacles

of faith be erected upon a solid granite foundation of knowledge, to which the soul may occasionally retreat while the pinnacles are undergoing repairs and alterations. It is possible to live sanely and wholesomely in the light of what we *know* about God—not to live as fully as we might live in the light of faith, but still, to live. Nothing, I believe, is more needed in this time of theological reconstruction than some such provisional concept of God as we have been trying to formulate—a concept of God certainly true as far as it goes. For lack of such a bed-rock concept, many are being pitched from the pinnacles of faith into the abyss of utter bewilderment, and are expressing opinions which show that they have lost not only faith but reason and common sense.[1]

[1] I hope my humanist friends will forgive me for saying that some of the views expressed by representatives of the new movement seem to me to answer to this description. To say, for example, that the phrase in the Doxology which describes man

In view of these considerations, it may even be desirable for some thinkers to devote all their lives to the pursuit of what we may call "pure" theology; that is, to the exact, scientific formulation of what we can *know* about God, as distinguished from what we can reasonably *believe* about him. For such an investigator to permit himself to make unverifiable statements about God would be as grossly improper as for a bacteriologist to announce the isolation of a new disease germ before the evidence was fully in. It is to be hoped, for example, that Professor Wieman, who has an

as a "creature here below," represents a mere survival of theocratic ideology, quite out of place in our democratic era—to make such an assertion is simply to fly in the face of all the facts, which emphatically proclaim man's dependent and subordinate place in the cosmos. It is not religious faith, it is astronomy, biology, and psychology that most loudly insist upon man's creaturehood, and which most clearly show that if he is to attain to any real eminence, it will only be by becoming the organ and instrument of something greater than himself, or, if one prefers a more materialistic phrase, by becoming a center for the transformation and transmission of cosmic energy.

extraordinary genius for pure theology, will not let himself be hurried, because of popular entreaties, into making any premature pronouncement concerning the personality of God. Such a pronouncement coming from a man of his empirical temper would have the effect of a full-fledged scientific theory; and he must obviously refrain from promulgating any such theory until he has doubted it and tested it as thoroughly as Darwin did in the case of the evolutionary hypothesis.

When all this has been said, however, it must be reaffirmed that the God of pure theology, the God we *know*, cannot possibly be the real God, but only, at best, an abstract cross-section of the real God. There is in this great problem an *x* of such colossal proportions that it dwarfs the known quantities almost into insignificance. Not quite into insignificance; for it is vitally important that when we take the leap of faith we keep our

feet firmly braced upon the springboard of knowledge. But if we are really to live as wisely as we may in a world as mysterious as this, we must take that leap. If for pure theology (corresponding roughly to what we call philosophy of religion) the chief virtue in a concept of God is empirical exactitude and certitude, for applied theology (systematic theology) the chief virtue in a concept of God is balance and proportion. The concepts of religious faith are not precise, like scientific concepts; they are vague, pictorial, symbolic, and apt to be riddled with inconsistencies; yet if they help us to "see life steadily and see it whole," they fulfill their proper function. Better a vague and inconsistent idea of God which embodies some real insight into the meaning of *x*, than a neat, well-trimmed idea of God which fails to allow for the element of mystery. Laugh,

if you must, at the paradoxical ways of systematic theologians—how they love to affirm, at one and the same moment, both free will and predestination, omnipotence and moral perfection—I will venture to assert that it is precisely in these shocking theological paradoxes, rather than in the neat, self-consistent systems of the philosophers, that we come closest to ultimate truth.[2]

It is now our task to consider the nature of religious faith and its relation to knowledge; to evaluate the contribution which Christian faith may make toward a more adequate conception of God; and to check and control the findings of faith, as far as possible, by the findings of science and philosophy.

[2] I do not mean to disparage either philosophy or pure theology. If applied theology is more adequate for the present, philosophy and pure theology hold great promise for the future. Thanks to them, we may have a far more predictable deity to rely upon, five hundred years hence.

THEISM AND THE MODERN MOOD

I

The argument so far set forth for the necessity of religious faith is in many respects parallel to the argument of William James's address on "The Will to Believe." I am indeed in substantial agreement with many features of that famous argument; for example, the contention that religious faith is a "forced option," which cannot be dodged by suspending judgment. But with one feature of it I am in disagreement: the contention that religious faith is most like a leap for life across a mountain chasm, when the determining motive of faith is the will to make it come true. Typically, religious faith is nothing so blind, nothing so self-assertive as that; it is, rather, a deeply felt intuition of a reality too complex and too vast to be more than vaguely and symbolically comprehended. As a perfect expression of what I mean, let me cite a re-

markable passage from G. A. Studdert-Kennedy's last book, *The Warrior, the Woman and the Christ*[3] (published by Richard R. Smith, Inc., New York)—a precious legacy from a great soul. I refer to the passage in which he describes the first independent religious experience that ever came to him:

I was alone at night on a moor by the sea. Above me a dark velvet dome and a million stars. Beneath me moving slowly in a heavy swell the sea. No sound but the rustling of a breeze through the heather, and the boom of the waves against the cliff. I was alone, that is I was acutely, painfully, conscious of myself as a reality, and at the same time even more acutely conscious of that vast, shadowy, mysterious other-than-myself, looming up out of the darkness over against me—the universe—the world and all those other worlds that shone like points of light above me. To say that I was completely alone at that moment would be no more true than it would be to say I was alone on another vividly remembered occasion

[3] Pages 170-172.

when I lay by myself in no-man's land and, with my heart in my mouth, watched a dark moving object which came toward me not knowing whether it was a friend or a foe. . . . Supposing I whispered: "Who goes there?" Would the answer be a bullet or a friendly word or silence? . . . Well, I made my cry and I got my answer. . . . At the time it was only one word, "God." . . .

It is in some such moment of solitude, when a man [is] acutely conscious of himself and the universe set over against one another, that all vital religion is born. There must have been a tremendous moment in history when Jesus of Nazareth stood looking out into the darkness and called His challenge to the universe: "Who goes there?" He asserts with unfaltering certainty that someone answered and said "Our Father." . . .

Was He right and did that answer really come or was it only His imagination?

Studdert-Kennedy goes on to argue, most impressively, that the expression "only His imagination" is misleading: that it is in fact

only through imaginative, pictorial thinking that we can escape from the tyranny of sense-perception and get any impression of the total meaning of the world. This implies, of course, that religious concepts are never so accurate as scientific concepts; but it also implies that they are not blind. Given a well-organized, morally sound, and highly sensitized personality, deeply concerned over the problem of human misery and human destiny, may we not expect that when such a personality faces the universe, in a receptive mood, some aspects at least of Reality-as-a-whole will be faithfully reflected in the mirror of that soul? And may we not say that the sum-total of such intuitions of religious genius constitutes an important body of data, of exceptional metaphysical significance? From this point of view, the cleavage between faith and knowledge, so sharply drawn in William James's "Will to Believe," begins

to vanish. What is today the faith of the few may some time become part of the knowledge of all.

It is in this light that we must view the contribution that Christian faith has to make to the conception of God. We are not to regard any of its revelations as infallible; and we may in fact be sure that they all contain some slight bias or some error in matters of detail. We must, therefore, welcome criticism from the adherents of other religions and from the opponents of religion. Yet, as Christians, it is our peculiar duty to make the findings of Christian faith and Christian experience available and comprehensible to mankind; and we could hardly be forgiven by posterity if we were to wrap this treasure in a napkin and bury it in our own back yard. Let us consider, then, what Christian faith has to say concerning the ultimate nature of God.

II

I suppose that the phrase, "the God of Christian faith," would suggest to many people something naïve and unsophisticated: a celestial king sitting upon a literal throne in a highly materialistic heaven, elevated a certain number of geographical miles above the earth, but not too remote to keep a watchful eye upon the behavior of his human subjects. Such is the picture which recurs in medieval art and architecture; and most accounts of the Copernican revolution in astronomy make it appear that in abolishing this literal throne and this materialistic heaven, Copernicus did something irreparable to the God of Christian faith. It is a curious fact, however, that this naïve picture of God—"the God of popular imagination" as I should prefer to call it—is nowhere to be found in serious theological literature, before or after Copernicus. Neither

Origen nor St. Augustine nor St. Thomas Aquinas has any such notion of God; and even Dante, when he completes the ascent of the celestial spheres, and is ushered into the presence of God, finds—what? Not a king upon a throne, but a sea of light and life and love, wherein the essence of all goodness and beauty is comprehended, and in the contemplation of which the restless will of man is stilled and satisfied at last.

Shall we, then, look to the great theological systems for our conception of the God of Christian faith? That, too (I regret to confess), would be a mistake; for the mind of the theologian, with its demand for logical consistency and its preoccupation with the intellectual issues of the day, is constantly in danger of devitalizing the faith it is trying to defend. No set of algebraic equations could be more remote from vital religious experience than that formidable body of ab-

stractions known in theology as the "attributes of God": immutability, immensity, eternity, infinity, incomprehensibility, aseity, simplicity, and all the rest! No doubt there is some ultimate connection between simple faith in God and these cut-and-dried theological concepts. Perhaps if they could be taken in small quantities and soaked in water, like dried apples, they might be made religiously edible.

But for our purposes, it will be best to derive our conception of the God of Christian faith not from professional theologians, but from religious thinkers of another sort; men who, while possessing a trained and critical intelligence, are primarily concerned with the direct interpretation and guidance of Christian religious experience. I suggest two modern men as our guides: an Anglican clergyman whose war-time experiences turned him into a prophet, and a great Catholic lay-

man whom his friends unanimously regarded as a saint. We have already alluded to one of these men: Studdert-Kennedy. The other is the late Baron Von Hügel, formerly a leader in the Catholic modernist movement. We shall take their testimony by inquiring of them wherein they disagree with a purely humanistic or even a purely empirical conception of God, and what they have to say about those great metaphysical questions which a purely empirical theology must refrain from answering.

In Baron Von Hügel we have an uncommonly fine representative of the Catholic type of Christian piety. Himself a practicing mystic, he was at the same time intimately acquainted with the lives and writings of all the great Catholic saints and mystics, and the author of a massive work, *The Mystical Element in Religion*, in which he sought to penetrate to the inner significance of this type of

Christian experience. A great weight of authority therefore attaches to the criticisms which he passed upon contemporary theology —far more than attaches to any papal encyclical or other official pronouncement.

As one runs through the letters which Von Hügel addressed to his fellow modernists in the Catholic Church, one is impressed with his recurrent emphasis upon the transcendence of God. To most of the modernists, a God of human experience, immanent in nature, history, and the inner life—a conception not far remote from the conception developed in our preceding chapter—seemed quite sufficient. Speaking on behalf of the saints and mystics, and his own profound religious experience, Von Hügel protests against this view again and again.

I have had for years, increasingly [he writes to Father Tyrrell] a double sense: of the large, spacious range of our ethical, etc., capacities, and

of the necessity and value of an ideal and indefinite exercise for them; *and* of all this not being God, not one bit, not one bit. . . . God is emphatically *not* simply our Highest Selves . . . religion is *not* a simple or full intercourse between equals . . . human-ideals prolonged, purified, enlarged indefinitely, can, at best, but help us to get nearer to a sense of that difference. . . .

God is certainly not, in any degree or sense, simply (spatially) outside of, or above, us; and these spatial pictures have indeed all to be interpreted in terms of spiritual experience and spiritual reality. But this experience itself is *essentially* as truly of God transcendent as of God immanent; of a Spirit indefinitely more spiritual, a reality which is nobler and of a higher nature than our highest, and leaves us with a noble thirst—as well as of this same Spirit as penetrating us through and through, and satisfying our cravings. If one were to take your clear-cut Immanentism as final and complete, that noblest half of the religious experience of tip-toe expectation, of unfulfilled aspiration, of sense of a Divine Life, of which our

own but touches the outskirts, would have no place.[4]

Closely associated with this recurrent emphasis upon divine transcendence, there is an emphasis upon what Professor Hocking calls "The Divine Aggression" and what Rufus Jones calls "The Double Search": the belief that God is not the passive and unconscious object of our devotion, like Aristotle's God, but is actively and consciously seeking us, as well. In writing to Mrs. Lillie on Science and Religion, Von Hügel expresses himself as follows:

Now Religion . . . is a gift from above downwards, not a groping from below upwards. It is not like Science a coral-reef, it is more like a golden shower from above. . . . For myself I must have both movements; the palace of my soul must have somehow two lifts—a lift which is always going up from below, and a lift which

[4] *Selected Letters,* ed. by Holland, pp. 124, 125, 139. New York, E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc.

is always going down from above. I must both be seeking and be having—I must both move and repose.[5]

This demand for an element of possession and repose in religion leads Von Hügel to be dissatisfied with any view of God which involves him too completely in the evolutionary process and the temporal flux of things. An enthusiastic reader of Bergson, Von Hügel nevertheless believes firmly in divine eternity and divine self-sufficiency. In the essay on "The Idea of God," where he develops his own conception quite fully in the process of criticizing Dr. Pringle-Pattison's, he contends that there is in our own experience of time and change an element of Altogetherness, of Eternity, which points to a complete transcendence of time and change on the part of God; and he objects to any conception of the Divine Life which makes

[5] *Ibid.*, pp. 353, 354.

it dependent on the step-by-step development of finite creatures.

God [he says] is found so lovable and so love-impelling, precisely because He who has no essential need to be loved by finite spirits, still less to attain to self-consciousness by their existence and by His love of them, nevertheless does love them far better than ever they can love themselves. . . . And I submit that one of the two polar facts and truths present in all the deepest religious experiences is that the divine life *is* thus self-sufficing. The scholastic distinction between God's essential glory as already attained by His own unspeakably rich inner life, and God's accidental glory, as attained in and through finite spirits and their happiness as found by them in Him may be clumsy, wooden, what not; but it stands for certain fundamental implications and intimations of religion. . . .[6]

We may summarize Von Hügel's conception of God by saying that God, to him, is the

[6] *Essays and Addresses,* 2nd series, pp. 153, 154. New York, E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc.

"Realized Perfection" from whom all Beauty, Goodness, and Truth are derived; and at the same time the "Living Unity" by whom all concrete organisms and integrative processes —from the crystal to the living cell, from the amœba up to man, from the human individual up to the state and the church, from the Christian Church and its Lord up to the whole evolutionary process—are constituted and sustained. "Thus," in his own words, "from a lichen or seaweed up to God Himself—the unspeakable Richness (because the incomprehensibly manifold Unity and complete Organization)—we find ever increasingly rich, organized unities." [7] This conception represents a natural and almost inevitable expansion of the empirical idea of God which we developed in our last chapter. It pushes the search for a perfect object of

[7] Thorold, *Readings from Friedrich Von Hügel*, p. 77. See the whole of selections 15 and 16, taken from *Eternal Life*.

devotion beyond the evolutionary process itself to an absolute Source and Ground. It includes all that we found in our empirical quest, but refuses to stop where we stopped, or ever to stop until it reaches an absolute Resting Place.

Studdert-Kennedy can hardly be expected to share the calm serenity of Von Hügel's faith. He is not a mystic, but a prophet; not one who stood "above the battle," but one who went in person through the hell of war, and felt for a time that God had forsaken him and Christ was a "dreamy fool who knew nothing of the world." [8] At first sight, his faith seems to be in flat and savage contradiction with Von Hügel's, for his experience of colossal evils leads him to a vehement rejection of all theories of an Absolute and Omnipotent Deity. God is to him not an

[8] G. A. Studdert-Kennedy, *The Warrior, the Woman and the Christ*, p. 271. New York, Richard R. Smith, Inc.

eternal pool of peace, but a "creative warrior," eternally laboring and eternally suffering.

How can the Almighty strive, and wait, and suffer? I have tortured myself with that question. But I am going to torture myself no longer. It is a mad question. . . . It arises out of the tyranny of the absolute, and the absolute is the devil, the very devil. . . . Absolute power, absolute wisdom, absolute peace, absolute joy, absolute everything, evolution as a method and consumptive children in Camberwell dying with rotten teeth. That would burst any brain and break any heart.

There is, thank the good, striving, suffering, loving God, no evidence for the existence of this absolute being anywhere. . . . If I, being human, and living in this world, imagine the author and creator of it as possessed of absolute power and dwelling in absolute peace I shall be slandering and blaspheming Him. . . . He is more like a devil than a God. I find no traces of absolute easy

omnipotence in the universe as I see it nor, thank God, can I find any traces of it in the universe as Jesus imagined it. . . . It is true that He called God Almighty Father but on His lips it was no mere metaphysical compliment, it was an expression of a vivid and vital faith in the power of the working Father to accomplish His Will in the world.[9]

It would seem as if Studdert-Kennedy and Baron Von Hügel were standing in complete opposition to one another; yet further consideration reveals the fact that they are simply defending opposite poles of a paradox. Both, in the last analysis, find God best revealed in the Cross of Christ. Baron Von Hügel indeed protests against attributing suffering to God; but in many a passage he stresses the outgoing, sympathetic, active side of God's nature as revealed in Christ and his saints.

[9] *Ibid.*, pp. 192-195.

Studdert-Kennedy rejects a God remote from human ills, and cleaves to Christ as to a brother and friend; but he also insists that the only Christ we can worship is a "cosmic Christ," "a Christ in whom all things consist and find their vital significance," "a Christ whose eyes are the stars, whose voice is the winds, whose creative energy is the life of the world." [10] It takes both of these men together to utter the full testimony of Christian faith. One represents the Greek mystical tradition which has always dominated the thought and piety of the Catholic Church; the other represents the Hebrew prophetic tradition which came to life again in the Protestant Reformation. One thinks of God as the Absolute Being, above the vicissitudes of time and change; the other thinks of God as Holy Will.[11] One leans toward pantheism,

[10] *Ibid.*, p. 267.

[11] On the contrast between the Greek conception of a timeless Absolute and the Hebrew conception of a divine Provi-

the other toward dualism; but each is held back by a dim intuitive consciousness of the truth which the other represents.

Can the paradox be resolved? If we are wise, we shall not try to resolve it too completely. In the realm of faith, balance and proportion are more significant than exactness and consistency; and the best way to hit the bull's-eye of theological truth is by affirming both sides of a paradox that stretches halfway across the center of the target—not by yielding to the pull which either end of the paradox exerts. I am not in sympathy with all features of Karl Barth's theology, but I think he is right in his contention that the ultimate affirmations of religious faith always involve an element of paradox, and can be rightly stated only by a delicate and constant

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dence at work in history, see the Abbé Laberthonnière's remarkable book, *Le réalisme chrétien et l'idéalisme grec.*

balancing of the Yes and the No—like the delicate and constant balancing process by which a tight-rope walker keeps erect in mid-air.

How shall we describe the paradoxical nature of the God of Christian faith? Stated in sober prose, it fairly shocks our logical sensibilities: a Being both transcendent and immanent, active and at rest, suffering and at peace, personal will and impersonal cosmic energy, born once upon a time in a Palestinian stable and nevertheless without either beginning or ending. Yet this tissue of logical inconsistencies is rooted in our highest human experience; and when it is put into poetry, the true language of religion, it warms us with a sense of its comprehensive adequacy:

> Lord of all being, throned afar,
> Thy glory flames from sun and star;
> Center and soul of every sphere,
> Yet to each loving heart how near.

III

Does Christian faith in God then resolve itself in the last analysis into a fleeting intuition, a transitory emotional glow? If it were so, we might easily be intimidated by the theory which sees in it only a childish demand for an emotionally satisfactory world. The emotional and intuitive aspects of faith are undeniable; but there are likewise rational and moral elements in it, which tend to correct and stabilize its vague intuitions. In conclusion I should like to call attention to some of the rational and moral considerations which support Christian faith in God, grouping them around the two polar concepts of divine Greatness and divine Goodness.

1. *Divine Greatness* (transcendence, prior initiative, self-sufficiency, emphasized by Von Hügel).

For the modern mind, it is of course Von

Hügel's end of the Christian paradox which chiefly needs proving. A struggling God like Studdert-Kennedy's, working like yeast in the cosmic process, may easily be accepted as a poetic personification of that "inherent radicalism" of nature in which James Harvey Robinson once professed his belief. But a God like Von Hügel's, surveying and controlling the cosmic process from a point of rest lying above and beyond it—what is such a God but a last relic of those static pre-evolutionary ways of thinking against which Professor Dewey is continually warning us? Now I grant that there are serious rational difficulties involved in Von Hügel's view if its logic is pressed too far. Grasping after absolute perfection in its object of worship, it runs the risk which every form of absolute idealism incurs—the risk of losing all in grasping at everything, and giving us a deity who, instead of embodying all goodness, is,

like Nietzsche's Superman, "beyond good and evil." Yet, as a regulative concept, Von Hügel's view supplies a needed corrective to current ways of thinking—a corrective that is rationally as well as religiously necessary.

It is increasingly realized today that the process of evolution which has occurred upon this planet is not self-explanatory. The immanent urge, or "nisus," which pushes it on to higher and higher levels is incomprehensible except as a response to external stimulation, as a result of the pressure exerted upon the life of our planet by a vaster life in which it is environed and included. And some thinkers go on to conclude that all the richness of organization, all the wisdom and goodness which have been progressively achieved on this earth were already prefigured, long before the earth was habitable, in that Environing Life. Here, too, the still unrealized possibilities of mankind are already actua-

lized. Such, in substance, is the conclusion at which Lloyd Morgan hints in his *Emergent Evolution.* Starting with a simple naturalistic account of the evolutionary process, in which the successive "emergents," from life up to intelligence, and from intelligence up to "deity" (the quality which appears in the noblest human beings), are explained as the result of a combination of already existent elements, he concludes that if the symmetry of thought is to be preserved, the pyramid of emergence must be supplemented by a transcendent sphere of divine perfection, which, so to speak, pulls up the pyramid from above by letting down Platonic forms.

Fanciful as this may seem, it is more rational than a conception of the evolutionary process which represents it as bursting up volcanically from below, without any eliciting stimulus. Every process which we are able to survey as a whole—the development, let

us say, of some reptiles into birds, and others into mammals, or the development of an embryo into a full-fledged horse, or tiger, or human being—every such development is the product not only of hereditary drives bursting up from below, but also of environmental conditions pressing down from above. Must we not, therefore, conceive of the whole evolutionary process as itself having an environment from which it draws its life, and in which, from the beginning, the kind of development which was to take place was already, in a measure, predetermined? If this be granted, it follows that the nature of that environment can be inferred from the highest types of development which take place under its influence. Since the highest type of integration occurring in the evolutionary process is that which we see in the richest forms of human personality, it is fair to assume the presence in the superevolutionary environ-

ment of an at-least-personal Being, possessing a central unifying consciousness, who dominates the evolutionary process from above. This Being need not be considered as an immutably *static* Being, but as a vastly more *stable* Being than any creature that is wholly caught in the flux of development.[12] Such a Being would certainly be *great* enough to satisfy Christian faith; but would he be *good* enough?

2. *Divine Goodness* (creative good will, Christlike in character, emphasized by Studdert-Kennedy).

It may be laid down as axiomatic that the powers which control and dominate human life cannot and ought not be worshiped as divine unless they can be at least dimly perceived to be working for ends that we can

[12] The argument just sketched is more fully developed in my article called "Reasons for Believing in God," in the *Journal of Religion* for November, 1923 (Vol. III, No. 6, pp. 598-615, especially pp. 605-615).

approve. There are times when those powers seem bent upon the ruthless destruction of all that we hold good and beautiful. At such times it is impossible to believe in more than a finite God, who seems to be overruled for the time being, like the gods of Olympus, by steely Fate and grim Necessity—or perhaps by the influence of the blindly-running stars! Yet sometimes, as Maeterlinck says, man "has been enabled to seize a glimpse of a plan and an intellect vaster than could be conceived by his unaided imagination";[13] and at such times it is possible to believe in an overruling Providence, or at least a Moral Order of some sort. Premature and too simple formulations of this faith have broken down again and again; yet it never dies. "I have

[13] *The Life of the Bee*, p. 311 (Dodd, Mead & Co., Inc.). Cf. the passage about the "three semblances," pp. 328-344. The whole book is an impressive argument for a superintending providence of some sort—all the more impressive because the argument is not pressed.

been young and now am old," said the Psalmist, "yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread." Too simple a formula! You may remember how Thackeray achieves a supreme effect of tragic irony by making good old Colonel Newcome, deserted and betrayed in his old age, encounter those words while joining in the responsive readings at divine service in the poor-house! Yet the faith in a "power not ourselves that (at least) *makes for* righteousness" is a faith that will not down; and a survey of the whole course of history reveals great trends which powerfully confirm it: a trend toward greater reverence for individual personality and at the same time toward greater political unity; a trend toward decreasing reliance upon brutal coercion and increasing reliance upon reason; a trend toward progressive mastery of the powers of

nature, and more equitable division of human burdens and privileges.[14]

It must be admitted that faith in Divine Providence is under a cloud just now. Before the war, we found it easy to believe in a smiling and benignant Providence, rolling on the chariot of Progress from victory to victory, and from bliss to bliss. During the war, we read our Hebrew prophets, and with a sense of tragic exaltation looked out upon a world where a stern but righteous Providence was bringing down a well-earned retribution upon the heads of the wicked. Since the war, we prefer to take our history naturalistically, in the mood of *The Bridge of San Luis Rey,* with tender pity for the tangled lives of mortals, but with a sardonic smile at the Brother Junipers who try to see any divine meaning in their fate. We are a shell-

[14] See Shailer Mathews, *The Spiritual Interpretation of History,* for a convincing tracing of some of these trends. Cambridge, Harvard University Press.

shocked and embittered generation. We are inclined to turn savagely upon anyone who tries, after the great fiasco of the war, once more to "justify the ways of God to men." Lucky if he is not burnt at the stake, like Brother Juniper!

While faith is thus wounded and limping, it is perhaps best for the theologian to confine himself to modest assertions concerning the presence of God in the midst of human events. In wise parental care, in loyal friendship, in educational activity and public service, it is not hard for faith to see the human manifestation of a divine love "that from our birth over and around us lies"—a sacrificial love like Christ's, seeking out the wayward soul to redeem it, pursuing it with kindness like a veritable Hound of Heaven. If, behind the stern impersonal working of the natural order and the rigidly impartial working of the moral order, the attempt to

find that same disposition tends to weaken the sense of the divine goodness, then it is best to sacrifice something of the divine greatness, with Studdert-Kennedy, and keep the sense of the divine goodness intact. If the attempt to see the overruling hand of God in the midst of the tragedies of our time seems to make God the author of evil, it is better to postpone the attempt until men's minds are calmer.

One thing can be asserted without wounding the most tender ethical sensibility: that God is present, even in the midst of tragedy, wherever remedial and redemptive agencies are at work, turning evil into an occasion for Christlike deeds of sacrificial love. The Cleveland Clinic disaster was a great evil, but God was in it—not in the sense that he designed it as a chastisement for certain people, but in the spirit of those physicians and volunteer workers who met the crisis so magnificently.

One physician, working all day over the victims of the disaster, went home to die himself of the effects of the gas. When he realized that his own death was near, he turned to his wife and said, "My dear, these people must be cared for." Yes, God was in the Cleveland Clinic disaster! And God was in the war—not in the sense that he planned this great evil, that good might come, but in the spirit of those who, whether in the trenches with Donald Hankey and Studdert-Kennedy, or in relief work with the Quakers, rose to the occasion, and saw the great tragedy through "with malice toward none and charity for all." So much, faith can say without breaking the bruisèd reed or quenching the smoking flax; and it is sometimes best that faith should say no more.

Yet we must recognize that the faith of the great Christian theists has always been more robust than this. They were not fatuous opti-

mists, believing in progress and Providence because the times were prosperous; they lived in times as troublous as our own—hard as that may be for us to believe—and their faith was tried as by fire. They were not interested in abstract doctrines of divine omnipotence, but they uniformly refused to believe that the God of Redemption whom Christ revealed and to whom the Spirit bore witness was other than the God of Creation—"God the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and Earth." They saw God working not only through incarnate Love, in which his will was most fully expressed, but in the apparent impersonality of the natural order and the apparent harshness of the moral order; and they averred that even when men brought misery upon themselves by disregarding the moral law, God was yet able to "make the wrath of men to praise him," and bring some meas-

ure of good out of the sad muddle of human affairs.

The Founder of Christianity himself was quite aware of the impersonality of the natural order, which, as he observed, sent sunshine and rain (and, he might have added, lightning) upon the evil and the good alike; and he had a grim sense of the stern retributive justice of the moral order, which ordains that people like Dives, who separate themselves from their fellows by "a great gulf," shall suffer the inevitable consequences. But this in no wise hindered his belief that a God of redemptive love was in control of the natural and moral order. Were any such thoroughgoing theist to reflect upon the meaning of the World War, he might well offend us with the hardihood of his faith. He might suggest to us that God was present not only in the agencies which tended to cure the evils of the war, but in the gift

of human freedom and responsibility that made those evils possible. And he might suggest that in spite of the folly and cruelty of men, God's overruling Providence, working through inflexible moral, political, and economic law, had brought some measure of good out of the great tragedy—not such good as might have been accomplished by men fully surrendered to His will, but enough to guarantee that God cannot be mocked or utterly defeated.[15]

[15] It is hard, of course, for us to see *any* good in the war from our present perspective; but may I present, for what it may be worth, a theory of war which I owe to my colleague, Professor Oscar Jaszi, formerly Minister of National Minorities in Count Karolyi's short-lived government—himself an opponent of the late war, and a considerable sufferer from its consequences. According to Professor Jaszi, wars are the product of pent-up pressures due to slow starvation, psychological maladjustments, and social injustices of all sorts, which accumulate until at last they burst out volcanically in a wild riot of violence. The chaos of war gives these forces a chance to follow their natural line of expression. The resulting equilibrium of social forces is never so stable as that which might have been brought about by rational adjustment of differences and generous yielding up of privileges; but it is far more

I have no desire to minimize the difficulties of Christian faith. Were I to build an idealistic system in which they were all neatly neutralized, life would shout them again in

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wholesome than the state of tension which preceded the conflict. Simply to forbid or to renounce war, without draining off these pressures, may only make matters worse. In the case of the World War, Professor Jaszi enumerates three great benefits which have accrued to European civilization, none of them specifically envisaged in the original war aims of the Allies, but all of them the result of powerful subterranean forces which had been accumulating for years:

1. Europe is rid of three royal dynasties which had retarded her development for a long period of time: the Habsburgs, the Hohenzollerns, and the Romanoffs.

2. The peasant class in general, all over Europe, is better off, and in a better position to claim its rights, than ever before. (This statement Professor Jaszi makes without any qualifications whatsoever, and with a full sense of its vast implications. It is true, he remarks, that the peasant class was decimated by the war; but the descendants of those who died in the war will be happier than their fathers.)

3. Although the post-war treaties unfortunately created several new oppressed national minorities (such as the Tyrolese minority so ferociously oppressed by Mussolini), yet on the whole, more national minorities were liberated by the war than were created by the peace; and to be precise, the war has reduced national minorities in Europe from 54 millions to 17 millions. See Professor Jaszi's recent book, *The Dissolution of the Habsburg Monarchy,* pp. 454, 455.

your ears tomorrow morning, and you would dismiss my system. In the last analysis, Christian faith in God has its rooting in a venturesome moral attitude similar to that which is involved in every act of loyal devotion—a willingness to trust beyond the evidence. A generation like ours, which has been disappointed in its hopes and become distrustful of the very sound of such words as "loyalty" and "devotion," is not easily going to recover its faith in God. Yet how are we to succeed in our quest of self-realization, unless we can learn again to forget ourselves in devotion to some end beyond ourselves? Friendship and matrimony involve fearful risks, as our younger novelists are constantly reminding us; yet the Cynic or the Epicurean who refuses to form attachments for fear of disillusionment, robs himself of his best chance of happiness. Poor timid wretch, shivering on the bank of the river of life because he does

not dare to take the plunge! How much he misses! [16]

May it not be so with trust in God? If it involves even greater risks than human friendship or human love, may it not also involve greater rewards, for those who dare to take the plunge? We do not pity the parent who sacrifices himself for his child or the patriot who sacrifices himself for his country, if he does it with open eyes, aware of the risk he is taking. Secretly, we envy him, and wish we had the courage to follow in his train. Why, then, should we pity those who make the uttermost venture of faith, and live and die for an unseen Beauty, rooted in the heart of the universe, but not yet made mani-

[16] Even Mr. Will Durant, whose ethical philosophy starts from a frankly Epicurean basis, extolls the joys of love and parenthood, and says that if love turns to ashes, "it is because we have not shared suffering, or have not stood together over some cradle where our lives and our love might begin anew." *The Mansions of Philosophy*, Chapter XXVII, "The Quest of Happiness."

fest? Theirs is the greatest risk; but theirs is the greatest reward.

I confess that as I think upon the life of that supreme Lover and supreme Sufferer, "who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame," I am never for one moment tempted to pity him for the faith in God that led him to his death. Rather am I disturbed with an uneasy sense that we sophisticated modern folk, with our pitiful timidity and our persistent self-seeking, are living in darkness and misery when we might follow him through suffering into light and joy.

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